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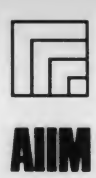
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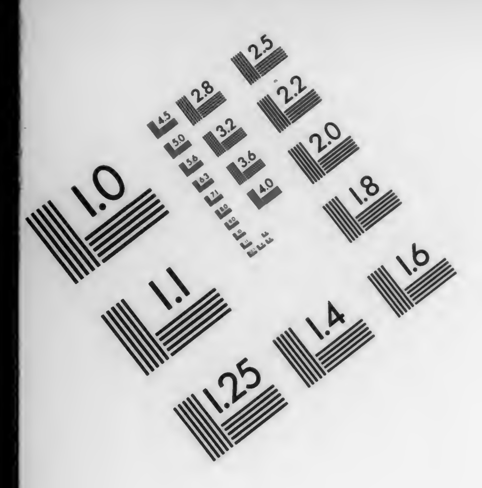
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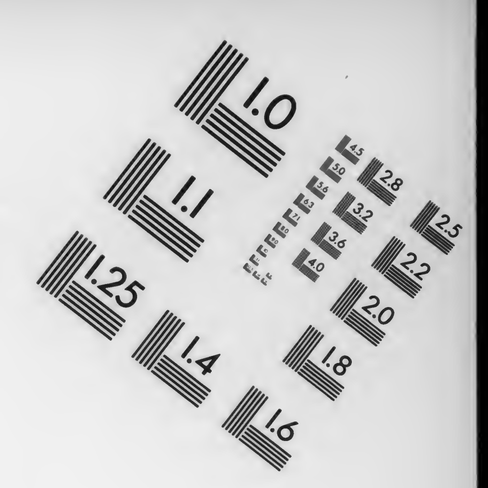


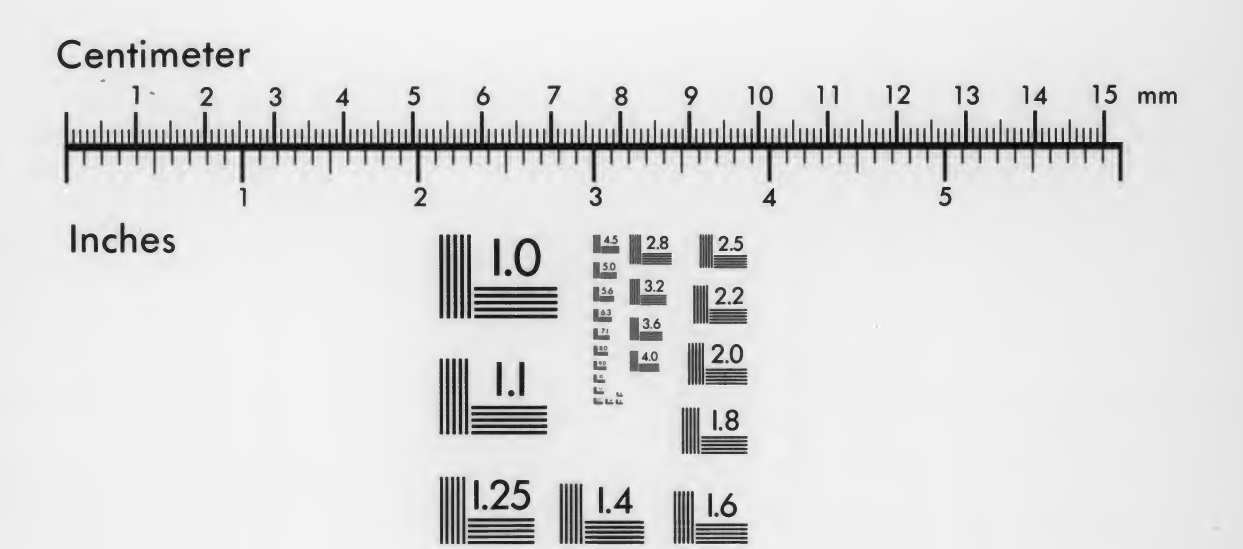
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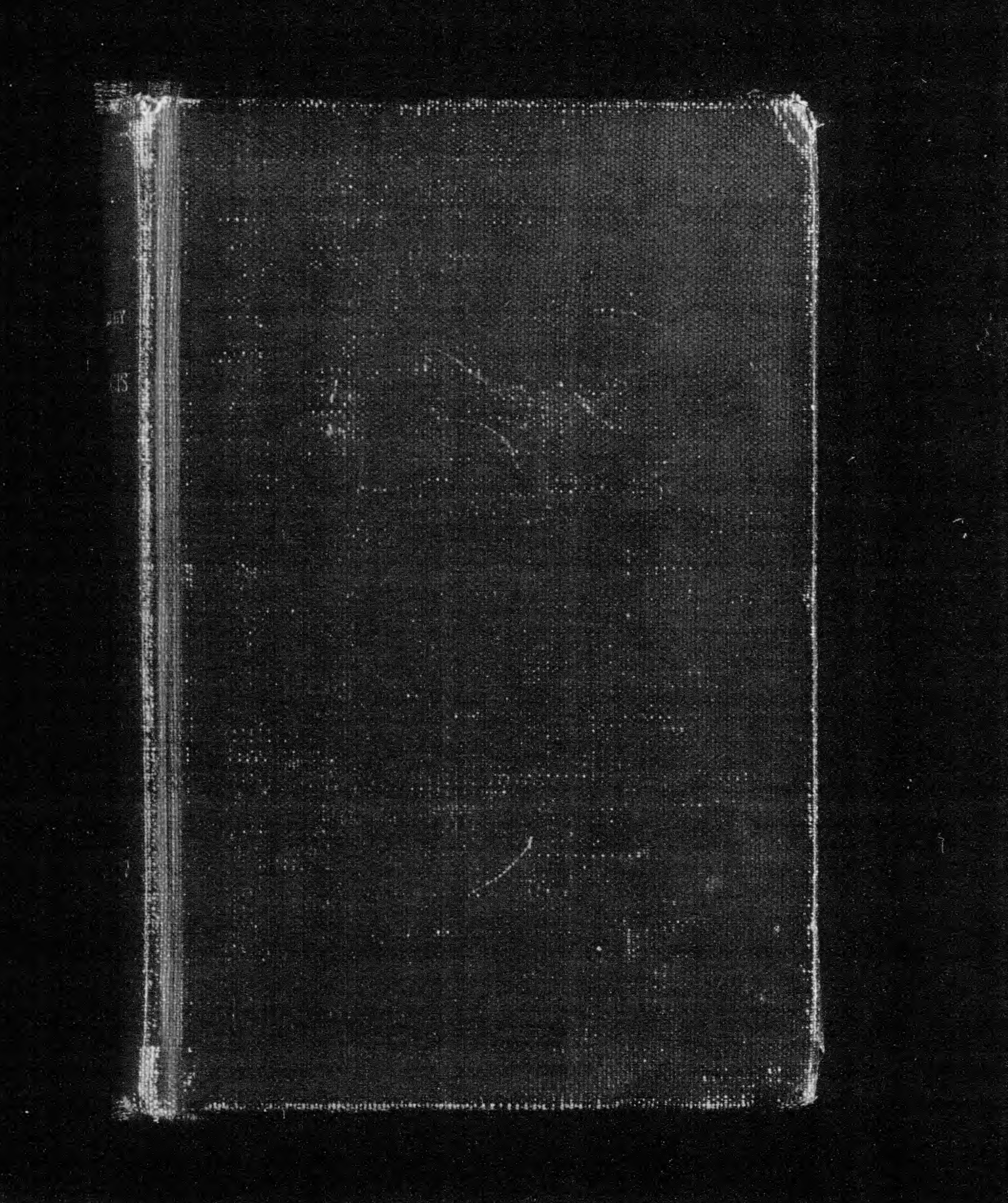
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FRANCIS

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FRANCIS

THE LITTLE POOR MAN OF ASSISI

A Short Story
OF THE
FOUNDER OF THE BROTHERS MINOR

BY
JAMES ADDERLEY
AUTHOR OF 'STEPHEN REMARX,' 'PAUL MERCER,' ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY PAUL SABATIER

NEW YORK
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD
1901

PREFACE

My object in compiling this little sketch of Francis of Assisi is merely to provide a small life of the saint for those who for any reason are unable to indulge in the purchase of the larger biographies. This book does not profess to put forth any original views on the subject of Francis, it is little more than a much-condensed epitome of the principal parts of M. Paul Sabatier's *Life of S. Francis of Assisi*, with occasional references to Brother Leo's *Mirror of Perfection*, and the *Fioretti*.

I sincerely hope that what I have written may whet the appetite of some so that they may pursue the study of this great saint. In the Appendix on "Sources of Information," I have referred to M. Sabatier's book, but I would remark here also that it is to him pre-eminently that we owe the very much truer conception of Francis and his work that we now possess, much truer than it was possible to have before his painstaking studies and remarkable discoveries. I wish here to thank him both for his public work and for his private kindness to me, notably in this latter respect, in writing the

beautiful introduction to this book, and in letting me see the proofs of his latest book concerning the Indulgence of the Portiuncula.

I have only to add that the quotations in this book are made by special permission of the authors or publishers from the following publications—

Life of S. Francis of Assisi, by Paul Sabatier. Translated by Louise Seymour Houghton; published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1894. Referred to in this book as *Sabat.*

S. Francis of Assisi, the Mirror of Perfection (*Speculum Perfectionis*). Translated by Sebastian Evans; published by David Nutt, London, 1899. Referred to in this book as *Spec.*

The Little Flowers of Saint Francis. Translated by T. W. Arnold; published by J. M. Dent, London (The Temple Classics). Referred to in this book as *Fioretti.*

Un Nouveau Chapitre de la Vie de S. François d'Assise, by Paul Sabatier (A New Chapter of the Life of S. Francis of Assisi); published by Fischbacher, Paris, 1896. Referred to in this book as *Un Nouveau Chapitre.*

JAMES ADDERLEY.

INTRODUCTION

BY M. PAUL SABATIER

(*Translated*)

THE life of S. Francis is a simple, living illustration of the mind of Jesus. Many Christians will tell me that it is better to consider the original than the copy; that I concede to them very willingly. But I hope that, in return, they will allow me to own that I am but a child, and that the copy has often helped me to understand and love the original.

In giving a name to His message, Jesus called it the Good News, the Gospel. But in what did this news consist, which was destined to penetrate the world and to transform it? It is summed up in the first words which fell from His mouth on the holy mountain, "Blessed are the poor!"

We shall understand this much better when we have seen it realized in Francis, and we may well say that, in this respect, the Umbrian prophet has entered even further into the heart of Jesus than the great S. Paul.

"Blessed are the poor!" Here, in this utterance of the Gospel, is the one most necessary for us, living at this dark end of a century. Consider carefully how we are situated. Look at Society, shaken to its foundations by unheard-of scandals, people pitted one against another by unprincipled journalists; then seek out the cause of all this suffering, of all this disorder, and you will almost always find it, after careful examination, in the fallacy which makes us confound happiness with the possession of riches. At the present moment everything, in politics, in education, and (why not say it?) even in the Church, is organized, directed, and inspired as if we had in this error an evident truth, which does not even need to be proved.

On the one hand, the more conservative sections of Society defend their gold and their property by every means. On the other, the more liberal sections war against them with a kind of frenzy. What if these last should have perceived the real mistake? Ought we to join them? No, their desires are identical, and they only aspire to substitute themselves for those whom they denounce.

"Blessed are the poor!" Here is the secret of political, social, and religious reform.

I add that we must desire poverty in the spirit of S. Francis, and preach it in the same way.

He began by desiring it for himself, and thus perceived what it really is—the pledge of the Liberty of Obedience. He never sought to enforce poverty; he had for all men, even for those who

were furthest from him, that deep respect which is the true power of the Apostolate.

The best way of furthering the triumph of truth and justice is not to attack the wicked; it is to serve God. It is not to prove to others that they are in the wrong; it is to make the truth shine out.

Where will the Church of Christ be to-morrow? I do not know. But what I am certain of is this, that she will be on the side of those who have made themselves poor; who have not imposed poverty on themselves as a privation or as a merit, but who have gained it with the enthusiasm of the prisoner who ended by breaking his last chain. Then they will understand the triumphant joy of the "Little poor Man," and what his life is who has no other aim than to "have Him only, that is sweeter than any!"[1]

[1] *Mirror of Perfection*, chap. xxvi.

CONTENTS

FRANCIS

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

TO understand the place which Francis and the Friars hold in the history of the Christian Church, it may be well to begin by a review of the ideas which have been embodied by those individuals or communities, who, in different ages, have lived in some form or other what is called the "Religious Life." By the term "Religious Life," used technically, is meant a life lived in special devotion to God, according to some peculiar method or rule.

It is more than probable that the virgins and widows mentioned in the early Christian writings were a regular order in the Church. S. Timothy is directed by S. Paul concerning the enrolment of widows. They are persons who have a certain character of devotion, their hopes "set on God"—continuing in supplications and prayers night and day; they are to be "well reported of for good

works" (1 Tim. v. 5–10). It need not, however, be supposed that they lived in community, or that they bore the characteristic marks of religious orders of a later period, such as a special dress. Probably they occupied themselves in regular prayer and psalm singing, and in good works.

But the desire that led to the Religious Life proper was the desire to get away from the wickedness of the world that surrounded the Church. This desire was encouraged by the contact of the Christians with the asceticism so common in the East. This is not the place to discuss the true and false ideas of asceticism, but it is sufficient to say that the Eastern ascetics ran into wild extremes of self-torture, as they do now. This was due to the root fallacy underlying all Eastern heathenism, that the body is evil in itself. Christian ascetics had a different ideal, namely, to discipline the body by fasting and self-denial, so as to render it a fitter instrument with which to serve God. It is true that this ideal was not consistently maintained, and that asceticism tended to become oriental in character. There were also ascetics among the Jews, who, no doubt, influenced Christian thought. Such were the Essenes, who existed a century or more before the birth of Christ, and numbered some thousands in the first century. They had common " Houses," and a special dress; they had community of goods with regular labour and times of prayer; they objected to oaths, weapons, and slaves; they rejected marriage. Their celibacy is

one of the indications that other besides Jewish influences had had an effect on the development of Essenism.[1]

There were also, chiefly in Egypt, a kind of monks—called Therapeutæ—whose object, according to their name, was the healing of the soul.[2] It is possible that S. John the Baptist, with the wild ascetic habits of his life in the desert, and S. James, the author of the stern Catholic Epistle, with its teaching about oaths, riches, etc., may have been partly affected by the prevalent ideas of Jewish ascetics.

But though these heathen, heretical, and Jewish ascetics paved the way for the Christian hermits, there was a distinction between them. The false idea of self-torture was protested against by Christian writers, at least at first.

It was from the middle of the second century that Christian asceticism developed. The "Solitaries," or "hermits," went into the deserts and elsewhere in crowds and settled there. They literally swarmed in the Thebaid and the Nitrian mountains. The two great names round which a tradition has woven itself are those of Paul the Hermit and Anthony. These hermits, or desert-men, spent their lives in solitude in caves and huts. They fasted from sleep and food for long periods,

[1] See Lightfoot's *Epistle to the Colossians*, and Schürer's *Jewish People in the time of Christ*, div. ii.

[2] The name may mean "worshippers." They were not Christians. See Delaunay's *Moines et Sibylles*, p. 7.

and, it must be confessed, sometimes did so in a spirit of most culpable rivalry, exhibiting feats of asceticism for their own glorification. Many of them were quite undisciplined, and even idle and unspiritual.

Gradually it became common for hermits to group their cells near one another, and to organize a kind of community life. Pachomius is said to have drawn up a Rule, and to have gathered many of the Solitaries into bodies, owning a kind of allegiance to Superiors. This was the Cœnobite system, or system of common life. The word monastery originally meant a solitary cell, but when community life became established, the name was applied to the common dwelling-place of monks.

S. Basil in the fourth century was the great founder of monasteries in this new sense, and his Rule is still the fundamental Rule of all Eastern monks. Cassian, also in the fourth century, studied the whole subject, and collected much information about Rules, etc., which formed the foundation upon which the great S. Benedict worked in producing his great Rule. S. Benedict is the founder of Western monasticism. He was born in 480, and died in 543. Though he began as a kind of hermit, he was destined to entirely supersede the old ideas of the solitaries, by a broad and far-reaching development of the community idea, such as the world had never yet witnessed. There had been obedience under the old Rules,

now it was to be the foundation of a regulated life of common Labour. The monks were bound to a life of busy work. Their chief occupation was worship, regular prayer day and night. Besides this there was to be manual labour. S. Benedict made the vows more strict and binding. Up to his time they had been little more than resolutions; now they were to be permanent and solemnly made. It was, however, only gradually that the three vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience became the regular mark of all monastic communities.

The Benedictine Rule became the foundation of Western monasticism, as Basil's Rule was of the Eastern. It has been interpreted and modified in many ways; for example, "work," which at one time meant agriculture, came to include secular study, and the Benedictine monks became the most learned men in Europe. But the main ideas of common life, common and regular worship, systematic labour, silence and obedience—these underlie all modifications, and are still the moving principles of Benedictinism.

The story of monasticism is the story of ups and downs, of enthusiasm and slackness, of strict observance and atrocious indolence, of extraordinary piety and heart-rending degeneracy. Within a short time of the death of S. Benedict the discipline of his houses began to fall. By the end of the ninth century it had fallen very low indeed. Then came a great revival. The Abbey

of Clugny in Burgundy was founded. The Cluniac monks were reformers of the strict observance, that is, they set themselves to revert to the original ideal of obedience. At the end of the eleventh century another great attempt was made to revive the strictness of the Benedictine Rule by the Cistercians, so called from the Abbey of Citeaux, or Cistercium, near Beaume. Many of our beautiful abbeys in England are old foundations of Cistercian monks. The original band of Cistercians was in danger of dying out, when the active power of the order was suddenly revived by the entrance into it of the great and holy S. Bernard.

He has been called "the loveliest flower of mediæval monasticism."[1] He was Abbat of Clairvaux, which became a more famous centre even than Clugny which by the time of Bernard had become rich and idle. The Cistercians, with their plain fare and their bare walls, their unornate services with scarcely any ceremonial, were a standing rebuke to the older monks, yet they in their turn fell.

"These societies," says a writer, "began by zeal, labour, love, self-denial. Then the world heaped riches upon them. Then they succumbed: then they had to be revived." By the twelfth century, the century of the birth of Francis of Assisi, the Abbey of Clairvaux had become immensely rich. It was time for the Church to produce a new type of

[1] Trench, *Mediæval Church History.*

the Religious Life. The ideal monk at this critical period was the man of prayer, withdrawn from the world for his own salvation, or acting upon the world only from within his cell, "to avert by the prayers and penitence of a few, God's anger from a wicked world."[1] The new idea was to let him come out to overcome the world and save others by "active self-devotion to mission work." The world was no longer pagan, but, what was worse, the Church was worldly. It was reserved for the Friars to save the Church from a deadlier foe than external pagan persecution, the internal foe of its own wickedness.

God did not fail His Church. Within twenty years of Bernard's death Dominic was born; within thirty years Francis saw the light.

To describe the Friars would be to anticipate the subject of this little book. Suffice it to say that they met the great need of the age in which they started. They were very different from the old monks of the earlier middle ages; their avowed aim was publicity, activity, freedom, human happiness. It is essential to remember this. It explains the surprise, the sense of novelty, which they evoked. People had never seen Religious at all like them before. It explains too the suspicion which they sometimes called forth.

Alas! they too fell into grievous disrepute and have never, in spite of periodic revivals, re-attained

[1] Dr. Creighton.

their early position of usefulness in the Church. The only other great order that has arisen is the Society of Jesus, founded by S. Ignatius Loyola in the sixteenth century, at just about the same period that we English people were reforming our part of the Catholic Church and repudiating the unrighteous claims of the Bishop of Rome. In fact it was the troubles of the Papacy which aroused the enthusiasm of the Jesuits, and they became the soldiers of the Pope to protect and advance his interests. If the Friars were different from the ancient monks, much more so were the Jesuits. They wore no distinctive habit, they said no Office, beyond what they were required as priests to say. They were simply a band of ministers bound by the very strictest military obedience, in this matter more strictly and irrevocably bound than any monks. They were, they are still, an army, drilled and disciplined, to go out, to live and die for the Roman Catholic Church. In studying the life of S. Francis we shall see how very different was his ideal to that of these later Religious in the matter of obedience. It was the difference between fatherly guidance and military despotism, the loving co-operation of children, and the cringing conformity of slaves.[1]

More Franciscan in their ideas were the active

[1] The origin of the peculiar Jesuit "Obedience" has been lately attributed to Mussulman sources by H. Müller, *Les Origines de la Compagnie de Jesus*, ch. ii. on "La Genèse de la C. de J." This has been replied to by Fr. Thurston, S.J., in *The Month*, Nov. 1899.

communities started by S. Vincent de Paul in the seventeenth century. His famous "Sisters of Charity" were not to be nuns, but they were to live strict lives, as if they were enclosed. "The sick-room was to be their cell, the Church their convent chapel, the streets and lanes their cloister, the fear of God their Grylle, modesty their Veil."

From the above short sketch it will be gathered that the place of Francis in the evolution of the Religious Life is that of one who, while maintaining the strictness and the devotional and ascetic character of Religious, yet created a new ideal by bringing them out of their cloisters and making them take their part in the active work of the Church. It must not be supposed that Francis by this deliberately tried to abolish the old monasticism. As a matter of fact the older form of Religious Life continued and continues to this day; even the followers of Francis himself, as we shall see, very soon relapsed into a kind of life which was and is scarcely distinguishable in its main features from that of the ancient monks. Nevertheless Francis gave a tremendous stimulus to the idea that religious communities must not be content merely to "exist beautifully," but are bound to be in some sort missionaries, if they are to justify their existence. It is this that makes the study of his life so intensely interesting to us in modern England. With the great Catholic Revival in this country there has come, as there was bound to come, the desire for the Religious Life. It is obvious that

the mere fact that King Henry VIII. suppressed the monasteries could not possibly have silenced the voice of the Holy Ghost calling men and women, as He always has done, to some form or other of this life in the Church of England. A king can abolish the outward framework of a religious community, but he cannot interfere with the designs of Almighty God. The remarkable growth of Sisterhoods during the past fifty years, and the intensely earnest, though slowly spreading, movement towards the revival of Brotherhoods, are certain proofs that God intends the Religious Life to exist again as part of the great Catholic system of our Church. The lines on which this development is running have already sufficiently disclosed themselves to make us sure that they are Franciscan rather than anything else. But no movement can live and last without a spirit to move and guide it. That is why we need a fresh draught of inspiration, such as can be drawn from a study of that sweet saint who, above all others, has been able to influence not only the men of his time, but the men of all ages who are willing to strive after the Imitation of our Lord.

CHAPTER II

THE TIMES OF FRANCIS

WE shall best estimate the power which Francis exercised if we begin by trying to realize the "bad old times" in which he was sent by God to save the Church. As we remarked in the last chapter, the old monastic system had been an escape from a wicked world, the Friars were destined to save a wicked Church from itself. The Cistercians in their early days had begun the good work. S. Bernard had said those famous and most terrible words, recalling the style of Jeremiah and Ezekiel: "It is no longer true that the priests are as bad as the people, for the priests are worse than the people." The clergy were some of them living immoral lives; the whole body of the Church was corrupt; the officers of the Church were grand lords with huge households and bands of retainers, some leading a profligate life. The monks were quite separate from the mass of the people, living idle lives and exercising no influence upon them, except by imposing upon their credulity with

stories of sham miracles. Some of the very monasteries themselves were immoral places. No doubt the wickedness of some of the monks has been grossly exaggerated, and historians have been too much influenced by contemporary denunciations on the part of their avowed enemies, but, unfortunately, we have also the unimpeachable evidence of most serious disorder and sin from official writings, such as the Papal bulls and documents directly dealing with specific cases. The "secular" clergy—that is, the clergy not belonging to a "Religious" order or community—the parish priests, and suchlike, were even worse. The most notorious scandal was the prevalence of simony. Livings were sold to the highest bidder; bishops descended to the low practice of accepting bribes in what should have been the most solemn transactions; clergy extorted money from dying people in the most barefaced way. To refuse to be bought over was looked upon as a sign of most exemplary virtue in a clergyman.

The masses of the people were steeped in superstition, feeding on stories of miracles and the supposed power inherent in relics, utterly ignorant of the ethical teaching of Christianity, and even of the elementary requirements of the Gospel, such as true repentance and faith in our Lord's atonement. The God of Love, the Saviour from Sin, the Spirit of Holiness: these were religious conceptions practically unknown to vast masses of Christians. The clergy seldom preached to them: religion was chiefly

a perfunctory system of masses and penances. Modern historians, with all their conspicuous fairness and critical insight, with all their patient desire to analyze every scrap of contemporary evidence, seem nevertheless quite unable to draw any picture but this most sad and revolting one of the state of the main body of the Church in the early part of the thirteenth century.

There are, however, certain brighter spots to relieve the darkness, though they are few. There were most certainly many very good and holy people, to whom these scandals were a daily subject for mourning and regret. The very fact that the Church held its own in spite of all the assaults made upon it is a proof that it still contained the salt of the earth. The gates of hell could not prevail. The popes were, many of them, personally holy men, and their office was always a continous assertion of the supremacy of the spiritual over the carnal, a witness to the unseen forces that govern mankind. It was a wild and turbulent age, a time of perpetual civil dissension and war. Even the worst clergy were simply men who had not been able to rise above the average morality of the day. We must not judge them from our nineteenth-century stand-point. Just as we form a wrong judgment if we hastily condemn some of the statesmen of the eighteenth century, who had not learnt the wickedness of bribery as we have learnt it, or some of the ecclesiastics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who had not

learnt religious toleration as we have learnt it (or think we have learnt it!), so we may be misjudging the Church of the thirteenth century, and condemning where we ought to pity.

There were many scattered here and there in the Church who boldly spoke up against the surrounding sin. Arnold of Brescia condemned the riches of the clergy; the "Humiliants," a body of devout men in the neighbourhood of Milan, were the forerunners of the Friars. Poverty was preached, even at the end of the twelfth century, before Francis, by a certain Pons of Perigord, and in South Italy by Gioacchino di Fiore, the great monk-prophet.[1]

Unfortunately, the chief of these early protests came from those who lapsed into heresy and became severed from the unity of the Church. The "Poor men of Lyons," or Waldenses as they were called after their leader Peter Waldo,[2] were sincere reformers. They made a vigorous attack on the worldliness of the clergy; they preached the necessity of a return to Gospel simplicity. It was no doubt largely due to such movements that later on, when Francis came preaching the same thing, but in the name of the Church, so many were ready to receive his message. There are many analogies to this in the history of the Church. In our own branch of the Church we

[1] *Sabat.*, pp. 37, 46.
[2] Or possibly Valdenses or Vaudois from the valleys of Piedmont.

have seen how the Oxford Movement followed the Methodist Revival, the earlier reformers unfortunately seceding from the Church, and the later ones preaching many of the same doctrines, but in loyalty to Church order and discipline, and so effecting what the others had failed to do. So in our own day, on a smaller scale, we see the Church Army supplying within the circle of the Church, and in obedience to its bishops, the need which the Salvation Army was intended to supply, but which it has been unable to meet without adding another to the innumerable sects which disturb the unity of Christendom and disparage the Sacraments instituted by our Blessed Lord.

No doubt the fault of these failures must be, to a great extent, laid at the door of the Church. As it is now, so it was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There were things in the Church which were quite intolerable to earnest men. Besides the obvious scandals which we have already noticed, there was a false sacerdotalism prevalent, which was a real foe to Christian liberty. The priests, instead of being representative of the people before God, as was and is their rightful position, leading men to God, officers in the great army battling against sin, approaching God at the head of the congregation in worship and sacrifice, had become substitutes for the people, doing things instead of them, separated from them in intention and ideal, carrying on an elaborate external ceremonial in which the congregation could take little intelligent

interest. This was due partly, no doubt, to the apathy and indolence of men who were quite ready to have their "religion" done for them, and quite unready to let it interfere with their every-day conduct.

So also the theologians were creating an atmosphere of deadly unreality in respect of Christian doctrine. The intellectual men felt them to be narrow and one-sided, the enthusiasts felt them to be damping and chilly. It is not at all surprising that a revolt ensued.

But the heretics of that age were not all of the same kind. The Waldenses were at first within the Church, and were only evicted by force of circumstances. They were sincere moral reformers, attacking definite moral evils. The Cathari, on the other hand, made a vigorous onslaught on Church doctrine. They taught the Manichean doctrine of Eastern mystics, that matter is the source of all evil. They practised a false asceticism, renouncing marriage and advocating suicide. Some of them starved themselves to death. "Nothing," says M. Sabatier, "could better prove the disturbance of thought at this epoch than that resurrection of Manicheism. To what a depth of lassitude and folly must religious Italy have fallen for this mixture of Buddhism, Mazdeism, and Gnosticism to have taken such hold upon it!"[1]

Against this rising tide of heresy it was the

[1] *Sabat.*, p. 42.

Pope Innocent III.'s wish to turn the zeal of the Crusaders. The Crusades had exercised a great effect upon the Church. In spite of much evil, such as cruelty and immorality, connected with them, they had drawn Christians together in a wonderful way, and caused them to act in concert in defence of the Holy Places. Could this same corporate activity be directed against heresy? Heresy was threatening to break up the unity of the Church, and the Pope was bent on using every available means to stamp it out. Doctor Creighton says that from the time of Innocent the duty of seeking out heretics and punishing them became part of a bishop's duty.[1]

But we are concerned with the history of these heretics only as showing us the state of religious turmoil into which Francis stepped with his message of peace and good-will. The significance of Francis lies in this: He met these troubles in a different way to any one else. Unlike the Waldenses, he remained firm in his obedience to the Church, while attacking quite as vigorously as they the corruption of the clergy. Unlike the Pope and the Crusaders, he proposed to use no force of earthly weapons with which to combat false teaching. Unlike the Cathari, he indulged in no theological strife of words or doctrines. Unlike all others, save Jesus his Master, he went out armed only with the shield of Faith in God and

[1] *History of the Papacy*, vol. i. ch. i. p. 22.

the breast-plate of Love. Unlike the priests, he preached the Gospel, not as a cast-iron system to be forced upon the people under pain of present and future punishment, but as the simple message of Life and Health sent to men from their Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. Unlike those who appealed merely to the intellect with subtle disquisitions of theology, he went straight to the hearts of sinful, sorrowing men, drawing them out of the darkness of a sordid, narrow, jaded existence into a sunny day of fresh, bright, vigorous life. He appealed to the best in man: he stirred up the embers of a dying faith: he brought Christians back to Christ Himself, bidding them drink again fresh draughts of the Living Water of the Fountain of Life.

It has been said of the Incarnation of the Son of God that it gave a "fresh impulse to Humanity."[1] The Life—that is, the True Life—was manifested, men saw it, touched it, handled it, and they lived again: they passed from death unto life. So another has said of Christ that He bent over the dead corpse of Humanity and whispered three words: "Love, Sacrifice, and a Heavenly Origin," and the corpse awoke to life.[2]

It is no exaggeration to say that in a smaller way this is what Francis did for Europe. He brought Christ in touch with men once more. He gave a new impulse to men. The very same

[1] Canon Carter. [2] Mazzini.

words as Christ's he whispered into the ear of the corpse. Love one another; sacrifice yourselves; be poor for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake; you belong to God; your Heavenly Father made you, and loves you. "All Europe woke with a start:" "Whatever was best in humanity at that time leaped to follow in his footsteps."[1]

[1] Sabatier.

CHAPTER III

EARLY DAYS AND CONVERSION

HALF-WAY down the lovely Vale of Umbria, on a spur of "purple Apennine," stands Assisi, still girt with its old walls and towers, its houses still rising white in the sunshine, much as Francis saw and loved it many hundred years ago. Narrow and crooked are the streets as they climb the hill to the old castle, picturesque are the houses with their overhanging eaves, noisy are the church bells that clash from the Campaniles, but first and foremost stands out in vivid recollection, as in reality it strikes first upon the eye of the pilgrim to this for ever venerable city, the great monastery of the Franciscans on the hill-side in the lower part of the town, buttressed by double and treble arches and enclosing in its hallowed precincts the heart of all Assisi, the two famous churches, one above another, beautiful in their simplicity, glorious in their art treasures, which guard the tomb and body of the saint. Above the town towers the beautiful peak of Monte Subasio, clothed with woods and carpeted

in spring on its lower slopes with flowers of every hue.

Here, about the year 1182, was born a son to Peter Bernardone and his good wife Pica. Bernardone was a cloth merchant of Assisi. This man did much business with the nobles and great people of the day, and he travelled far and wide in the exercise of his trade. It was while he was in France that the little babe was born, and on his return to Italy he insisted on giving the child the name of Francesco, the "Frenchman," instead of "John," which his mother had given him. This is said to have been the first time that the pretty name Francis, which is now so popular, was given to any child.

The father of Francis is not an attractive character. He was grasping, proud, and miserly. His mother Pica, on the other hand, was sweet and tender and, so we are told, beautiful.

There are many legends which have grown up around the childhood of Francis, but they must not be readily accepted. They are due to a desire to make the story of his life sound like a reproduction, even in little details, of the life of Jesus. There is no need to seek embellishments for the story of our hero. The life is beautiful enough in its simplest form.

From the very beginning the young Francis got among careless and even vicious company. He was bubbling over with fun and gaiety, a characteristic that he never lost through all his life. He was

a born leader of others, somewhat lordly in his manners. This too marked him through life. Before his conversion he astonished his fellow-citizens by his lordly manners. When he became a reformer of the Religious Life, he retained the same manners. His heart was transformed, but his imagination remained the same and his language also.[1]

He was the first among the youths of Assisi in jokes and pranks. His costumes were outrageously fashionable; his banquets were of the very best. It was the age of chivalry, and the troubadours, with their popular songs of knightly exploits and their improvisations of poetry and love language, had a great attraction for the young boy. This taste also affected him through life. He delighted to think of his friars in after years as "Knights of the Round Table," and, as we shall see, his songs and improvisations flowed out from his poetic heart even on his death-bed. But in all the careless heyday of his youth it does not seem that he ever offended against purity. His mind was always that of a healthy, happy boy. His generosity was unbounded, and already the spirit of poverty impelled him as he threw alms to the hungry beggars in the street.

In fact, in the boy Francis we see the natural, untrained joy and laughter, love and strength of mind, which Christ intends to lay His hand upon

[1] *Spec.*, Preface, xxix.

to make of it by grace a chosen vessel to bear His Name to the nations. Christ is not going to suppress his individuality, He is going to use it. That brightness is meant to light up the dull world of Europe; that joy is to cheer up the sad hearts of the sick and the sorrowful; that generous love is to warm the cold, dead body of the Church; that music is to sound in praise of God and God's beautiful world, and to draw men into a glad chorus of thanksgiving.

In the year 1202, one of the civil wars, which were common at the time, broke out between Assisi and the neighbouring town of Perugia. Francis went out to fight, and was taken prisoner. For a year he remained a captive, astonishing every one by the airy lightness with which he treated his position, and winning them by his lovableness. He is said to have spent his time drawing fancy pictures of the great deeds he was some day going to perform. "You will see that one day I shall be adored by the whole world," he said.

After a year's imprisonment he was released and returned to Assisi. This was in the year 1204, and he was about twenty-two years old. Once more he resumed his extravagant, careless life, but the hand of God was upon him, and he fell ill of a fever. It was during his convalescence that the wretched vanity of his present way of living came home to him. He despised himself. We read of him taking a solitary walk into the country, and in the midst of all the sweetness of the spring-time feeling

utterly crushed at the thought of his own useless life.

Instead, however, of surrendering to God at this point, he tried to escape from his sadness by a fresh plunge into pleasure and fighting. He heard of a certain knight who was about to join the celebrated Walter of Brienne, then carrying on a fierce warfare in South Italy. He resolved to accompany him and realize some of the fascinating ideals with which the troubadours had filled his mind. He made very grand preparations for this step. He provided himself with a gorgeous suit of armour, and then in a fit of generosity handed it over to a poor knight. He swaggered about, telling every one of the great things he was going to do. "I know," he said, "that I shall become a great prince."

Full of enthusiasm he rode out of Assisi, bidding farewell to all his old haunts. But that night he is said to have had a vision bidding him return. At Spoleto he was again stricken with fever, and the next day he rode home.

An extraordinary change had come over him. His excitement at the thought of earthly triumph seems to have entirely evaporated. He was quite unable to take up with his old life any more. His father and his boon companions were disgusted with him, but he was disgusted with himself. He wandered about in lonely places accompanied by an unknown friend, whom some writers suppose to have been the celebrated Brother Elias, who, as we

shall see, afterwards exercised such great influence in the Franciscan Order. But, like Jacob, he was really alone with God, wrestling with a mysterious power that was resolved to conquer him. These inward struggles affected him visibly. He would groan and cry and tremble. Yet once again his friends persuaded him to join in a midnight revel. They chaffed him, asking him if he was about to take a wife. "Yes," he replied mysteriously, "I am thinking of taking a wife more beautiful, more rich, more pure than you could ever imagine." Though he had joined their company, his heart was far from them. Christ was claiming him. We are struck in reading the story of this period of his life with the fact of his loneliness. His one companion leaves him for the most part to himself. The beautiful world of Nature, more beautiful in that fairyland of Italy than anywhere, was his meditation room.

To this period also belongs his first visit to Rome, when he flung all the contents of his purse on to the tombs of the Apostles, and exchanged clothes with one of the street beggars, spending the remainder of the day fasting and asking alms with the rest. Another story shows us the beginning of that care for the lepers which afterwards became one of the chief characteristics of the Order. One day he met a leper. At first he shrank from contact with such a loathsome object, and rode on like the priest in the parable. Then came the voice, the voice of Him Who was leading him on

towards the Life of Poverty and Sacrifice. It bid him go back. He went back and kissed the leper, giving him all the money he had on him. Then he went on to the lazar-house, or leper hospital, and comforted the poor victims of this terrible disease. This work for lepers became one of the fundamental objects of the Order. "Among other things," says Brother Leo, "that were declared unto the brothers, it was said that they must needs be humble servants unto the lepers and abide in their houses."[1]

This first leper story (there are many others) is important because it shows the tremendous advance that Francis had made. Let us suppose for one moment a careless, extravagant young Oxford man, or the promising son of a city merchant of modern times, stopping in the road to kiss a tramp all covered with filthy sores. We should feel, should we not, that the grace of Christ had made great advances in his soul. It was the love of Christ constraining Francis. Day after day he would wander about, praying at the wayside shrines, hearing mass at the little chapels which abounded in the neighbourhood. We can imagine him prostrate before our Blessed Lord, feeding on Him, getting to know something of the meaning of those mysterious words: "He that eateth ME, even he shall live because of ME."

There was one of these chapels of which he was particularly fond. It was dedicated to S. Damian.

[1] *Spec.*, xlv.

There one day he was praying among the ruins, for the building was falling to pieces. Before him was a rude crucifix, which is still to be seen in the Church of S. Clare. "Great and glorious God," he said, "and Thou, Lord Jesus, I pray ye, shed abroad your light in the darkness of my mind. Be found of me, Lord, so that in all things I may act in accordance with Thy Holy Will."

An answer seemed to come from the tender eyes that looked down on him from the Cross. Jesus accepted his sacrifice, and he accepted the dear Lord as his Saviour and Master. A real spiritual union took place between him and his Divine Lord. He took Him for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, till death and after death, for ever. "From that hour his heart is transfixed and melted into the memory of the Lord's Passion." It was real Faith, no mere intellectual acceptance of a theological proposition, but an actual self-committal to the Person of Jesus; no mere sentimental feeling of pity for the sufferings of Christ, or of comfort in the thought that through those sufferings he could secure a place in a future heaven, but a real, brave assumption of the Cross, an entering into the fellowship of the Passion of Christ, a determination to suffer with Him and to spend and be spent for Him. The sorrow of Francis for the sufferings of Christ was the sorrow of shame at the thought of human sin, but it was a practical sorrow that worked repentance and the desire to bring others to repentance. He lamented for the Cross publicly, that

men might hear and know what their sins had done. "Thus ought I to go throughout the whole world," he said, "bewailing the Passion of my Lord."[1]

The immediate result of his conversion was a resolution to restore the little chapel where Jesus had made Himself known to him. This may sound at first a somewhat trifling result. But it meant a great deal at the time. Francis was becoming consumed with love for his fellow-men in Christ, and the same love that made him rekindle hope in the poor lepers by attending to their wants, made him revive the hope of the poor priests and faithful Christians, by repairing their places of worship, which were falling into decay.

This restoration of ruined churches became another characteristic work of the Friars. It was actuated by love of Jesus, Whose altars were in danger of ruin, and by love of men, whose spiritual life would be helped by having places of prayer more worthy of the presence of the King of kings. A renewal of faith in Jesus and in the reality of religion will always issue in the restoration and beautifying of churches, as it has in the England of the present day. When men are smitten with the sense that religious observance is no mere dead form, that Sacraments are no mere ceremonies, but that the Living Jesus is behind them all, then they are bound to desire decency and beauty in outward

[1] *Spec.*, xcii.

worship. The wish for material reformation is the proof of the reality of the spiritual awakening. So Francis, fresh from his communion with the Lord Jesus, sought to renovate His sanctuary. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."

Francis always acted promptly after making up his mind. Just as he had quickly made up his mind to go to the war, and as quickly had come back from Spoleto, so now, without a moment's hesitation, he gave all his ready money to the priest of the little chapel, made off home, took his horse and some bright-coloured stuffs, the whole of his available goods, rode to Foligno, a neighbouring town, sold everything and returned to S. Damian. The priest knew well how angry his father Bernardone would be, for it was notorious that the selfish merchant had for long been thoroughly disgusted with his son's behaviour. As long as Francis was leading the careless life of a man of fashion, Bernardone had nothing to say; now that he was on the Lord's side, the Knight of Jesus Christ, no words were too bad for him.

Suspecting some mischief, Bernardone pursued Francis to S. Damian, but he managed to hide for several days, and his father returned to Assisi discomfited. Then Francis emerged from his retreat and boldly went home. The change that had come over him manifested itself in his outward appearance. He was pale and ragged, and the street children took him for a lunatic. They yelled at him, racing after him down the road, flinging

stones at him, and dancing wildly round him. Imagine the respectable Bernardone's horror on seeing his son in such a plight! Raging like a bull he dragged him into the house and locked him up in a dark room; his good mother released him, but Bernardone had resolved never to forgive him. He was to be disinherited. He appealed to the city magistrates. Francis refused to be tried by them, claiming that he was a servant of the Church. Bernardone was told to go to the bishop. A great crowd assembled to hear the episcopal sentence. The scene has become famous. Told by the bishop to give up his property to his father, Francis retired into the house, from which he presently came back, stripped stark naked. Putting his clothes and money on the ground before the bishop, he thus addressed the crowd—

"Listen, all of you, and understand it well; until this time I have called Peter Bernardone my father, but now I wish to obey God. I return him the money about which he is so anxious, and my garments, and all he has ever given me. From this moment I will say nothing but 'Our Father which art in Heaven.'"[1]

The crowd was stupefied. This was no madness after all. Probably at that moment there was sown the seed in many hearts which afterwards bore fruit in conversion at the preaching of Francis. The naked "madman" was the central figure of

[1] *Sabat.*, p. 61.

the picture. Taking an old cloak which the bishop's gardener offered him to cover his shivering limbs, Francis once more walked away from the city into the silent mountain pathways alone.

As he wandered about, he met some robbers, who, taking him for a madman, again stripped him, leaving him in a ditch, with nothing but his shirt on. Then he begged a tunic from a friend at a place called Gubbio, and at last found himself once more at the little chapel.

Again he set to work to complete the restoration. He begged the stones from the neighbours, he carried them himself to the chapel, and the work was finished early in the year 1208. It was during his stay with the priest of S. Damian that he began to beg his food from door to door, to save the household expenses of his poor companion. Thus did "my Lady Poverty," as he was wont to call her, become in very truth his bride.

But there was another little chapel that was destined to play an even more important part in the drama of Francis than was S. Damians. This was the Portiuncula, the Chapel of S. Mary of the Angels. To this holy place, now enclosed within the great Basilica at Assisi, but then a small ruined sanctuary belonging to the great Benedictine Abbey of Monte Subasio, Francis went, day by day, repairing it as he had repaired S. Damians, meditating and hearing mass.

This was to be the place of final Call. It was

like the house where S. John and S. Andrew went and saw where Jesus dwelt and abode with Him (S. John i. 39), learning who He was, getting ready for the "Follow ME."

At last it came. It was on the Feast of S. Matthias, the apostle called to fill a vacant place, called by the Holy Ghost after the ascension of the risen Christ. Thus Francis also was to be called these many years afterwards to repair the ravages made by treacherous apostles of the Lord in the borders of His Church.

Turning to the north, to symbolize the message of the Church to the outcast and the cold, the priest began to read the Holy Gospel for the day. "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the labourer is worthy of his food" (S. Matt. x. 7–10).

Straight to the heart of Francis this Word of the Lord went home. Any doubt as to his particular vocation vanished. The vision at S. Damians had called him to a life of complete self-sacrifice; the Gospel in the mass at the Portiuncula now told him how he was to obey. In each case it was the Living Jesus Who appealed to him. "Thou hast given thyself to Me," the Master seemed to say; "thou must pray, thou must meditate, thou must let Me save thy soul by grace, but thou art a chosen vessel

to bear My message out into the world by thy words and by thy life: there are My sick, My poor, My simple children, pour out thyself for them in poverty and love."

And he left all and followed Him.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF MINISTRY

THE date of the final call of Francis was in the year 1209. As usual he acted promptly and at once began preaching at Assisi. His sermons at first and throughout his life were of a very simple character. He called men to repentance and reminded them of the judgment. But to him repentance meant a real change of mind and a practical result. Francis knew nothing of sentimental appeals to the emotions ending in no more than a comfortable sense of posthumous security for self. Just as he felt within him an utter inability to shut himself in a cell and to slumber along in sanctimonious equanimity, so for others he felt that the acceptance of the Gospel must mean the acceptance of a new life to be lived in active and effective imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He could not "trim" or compromise, yet his generous love prevented him from ever being harsh or brutal in his demands. He simply offered Christ to men, the Christ of the Gospels, a human life of purity, of

joy, of poverty, of suffering, of unspeakable peace; the Christ of Galilee, the Christ of Calvary, the Christ of eternal glory, a crown of life indeed, but a crown that involved a cross. It has been remarked that the greatness of the demand made by our Blessed Lord was the cause of the genuineness of the response made to it by the first disciples. He demanded all that they had to give, and it called forth from them a readier and more thorough surrender than a less complete requirement would have evoked.[1] They forsook all and followed Him. It was a case of "all or nothing"; either Christ had the right to say "Follow ME," or He had not; if He had this right then they must give Him all. Our Lord knew what was in man before He made the demand. He knew that in the hearts of some at least He would find this readiness to acknowledge His claim and to sacrifice self. There are always men and women waiting for this kind of call, and ever and anon God sends a messenger to speak His invitation. Such a messenger was Francis. Like a prophet of old he had himself first eaten up the "roll" of God's word; he had taken into the very heart of his own being the sacrificed Life of Jesus; in his wanderings round about Assisi, in his communions at S. Damian and at the Portiuncula, in his visits to the Sacred Presence, he had been entering into that complete union with the Person of the Saviour

[1] *Ecce Homo.*

that enabled him to go out now and speak in His Name in such a way as to make men feel that to refuse him was to refuse the Lord Himself.

The first to be thus influenced by Francis was Bernard of Quintavalle. He was a rich gentleman of Assisi, who had carefully watched the career of Francis for some time past. He had seen his extraordinary patience and meekness under persecution, and he used to say to himself, "In no way is it possible but that this brother has abundant grace from God." One night he invited Francis to lodge at his house, and at night he watched the saint at his devotions. "My God, my God!" this was the whole burden of his simple prayer. Again and again he repeated this in an ecstasy of humble love at the thought of God's greatness and his own littleness. In the early morning Bernard went to Francis and said—

"Brother, I am quite purposed in my heart to quit the world and follow thee in whatever thou dost bid me."

Then they repaired to the church of S. Nicholas to hear mass and test this new call of God. Another would-be brother, by name Peter, accompanied them.

After service, at the request of Francis, the priest took the Missal from the Holy Table and opened it three times in the name of Jesus Christ, that God might reveal His Will to them by it. At the first opening he read the words, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give

to the poor;" at the second, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves nor scrip, neither bread nor money;" at the third, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

"Brethren," said Francis, "this is our life and our Rule, and that of all who may join us. Go then and do as you have heard."[1]

The three passages of the Gospel from which these words were taken (S. Matt. xix. 21; S. Luke ix. 1–6; S. Matt. xvi. 24) became probably the first "Rule" of the Friars, a sort of test to which Francis would draw the attention of each new postulant as he offered himself.

Bernard immediately, with true Franciscan promptness, went out into the streets and distributed all his possessions to the poor.

A certain priest, by name Silvester, seeing this was angry, and went up to Francis demanding more money in payment for some stones he had sold him for his church restoration. Whereupon Francis, taking a handful of money from Bernard, gave it to him saying: "Will that satisfy you?" The priest took it and went home, but considering the whole matter by himself that night, he was stricken with a sense of his own un-Christian behaviour, and coming back announced his

[1] It is possible that this miraculous opening of the Missal is legendary, and that Francis merely read these passages to Bernard and Peter as being the foundation of their Rule of Life.

intention of surrendering all for Jesus. This brother, Silvester, was one of the few ordained priests among the early Friars. Another such was Leo, who became the very near companion of Francis and his confessor. It is to him we owe the *Mirror of Perfection*, the earliest and most faithful account of his master, published within a few months of his death.[1]

Another of the early Brothers was Egidio, or Giles. He was eminently holy and gentle. S. Bonaventura says of him, "With my own eyes I have seen this holy Brother; his life was more that of an angel than a man; he was continually absorbed in God." About the time that he first came to Francis, dressed in his ordinary garments of the world, a certain beggar chanced to come too. Francis turned to Brother Giles and said: "Give the poor Brother thy mantle." With great gladness he did so, and "thereupon seemed it unto him that straightway God had sent new grace into his heart for that he had given his mantle to the poor man with cheerfulness. And thus after that he was received by the Blessed Francis he did ever make godly progress even to the very highest perfection."[2] Brother Giles may be taken as the "best example of the Franciscan spirit of simplicity and guilelessness" which was so conspicuous in these first Friars.

Another of whom many curious stories are told

[1] See Appendix. [2] *Spec.*, xxxvi.

was Brother Juniper. To be enjoyed thoroughly they must be read in the *Fioretti* or *Little Flowers*.[1] He was simple to an extraordinary degree, transparently sincere and humble. Francis said he would like a whole "forest of such Junipers," and that "he would be a good Brother Minor who had conquered himself and the world like Brother Juniper." His simplicity sometimes led him to some very quaint deeds, as when he cut off the foot of a live pig to make a nice dish for a sick man, or when he cooked a fortnight's food in advance in order to have more time for prayer. So ready was he to give up his clothes to the poor, that the Superior was obliged to forbid him to do it; but the next time he met a beggar he allowed the man to pull his tunic off his back without resistance, and to leave him naked. He was fond of letting people mock at him and insult his feelings, for he said that of all these punishments he was worthy and of much more.

Francis' own description of "a perfect Brother" gives us an insight into the spirit of these first Friars.

He said that "a good Brother Minor would be he that had the life and conditions of these holy brothers, to wit: the faith of Brother Bernard, that he had in absolute perfection, along with the love of poverty; the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo, that in truth was of a most holy purity; the

[1] See Appendix.

courtesy of Brother Angelo, that was the first soldier to come into the Order, and was fulfilled of all courtesy and kindness; the gracious aspect and natural sense with fair and devout eloquence of Brother Masseo; the mind uplifted in contemplation that Brother Giles had even to the highest perfection; the godly and continual activity of the holy Rufinus, that did always pray without intermission, so as that even asleep or at work his mind was always with the Lord; the patience of Brother Juniper, that did attain to a state of perfect patience by reason of the perfect renunciation of his own will that he did set before his eyes, and his surpassing desire to imitate Christ by the way of the Cross; the bodily and spiritual strength of Brother John de Laudibus, that at that time was strong in the body above all men; the charity of Brother Roger, whose whole life and conversation was in the fervency of charity; and the solicitude of Brother Lucido, that was ever passing solicitous, and was never minded to stay in a place more than a month or so, but when he liked staying in any place would forthwith depart therefrom, saying, 'Not here but in Heaven is our place of abiding.'"[1]

The life of these first Friars was a life of extreme simplicity and exuberant joy. They had no fixed dwelling-place; they built huts to live in, and they wore the coarse brown tunics of Italian shepherds, tied round with a rough cord, thus inaugurating the sacred "Habit" of the Order thereafter to become so famous. It was as if in these days a Community of Brothers in England were to start wearing corduroys and smock-frocks. They lived no regular "Community Life," such as the old monks were doing; in fact, that was impossible as long as they had no settled monastery. But they wandered about in companies of two or more brethren, sleeping in their huts, or even in hay-lofts, begging their food, tending the lepers in the lazar-houses, mixing with the people. From time to time they would meet again at the Portiuncula for prayer and mutual consolation. So far from being a body of mournful monks shrinking from contact with a gay world, they were a happy, joyful party of brothers, brimming over with innocent high spirits,[1] spreading brightness and laughter wherever they went, *Joculatores Domini*, "the Lord's jugglers."

[1] *Spec.*, lxxxv.

If ever they were sad, it was with the sadness bred of meditation on the Cross and Passion of Jesus, and the load of human sin that had weighed upon the Sacred Heart of their Redeemer.

Some of the people thought them mad; others objected to their begging. The clergy were somewhat suspicious of them, which was not unnatural, considering that "poverty-preaching" in those days generally meant heresy; others were jealous at the idea of lay-preaching. So unlike were they

[1] "*Toujours une mine saintement joyeuse.*"

to ordinary "Religious," that they were continually being asked what "order" they belonged to. Their reply was this: "We are penitents, natives of Assisi." On the whole the mass of the people were impressed by their simplicity, their contentment, their gentle, meek patience.

From the very first it was by their example, by the force of the Christ-life lived and manifested among men, rather than by any eloquent preaching, that the Friars made their way.

CHAPTER V

PROGRESS

As we have already noticed, the great difference between the Franciscan movement and the other similar efforts of that period towards reform consisted in its loyalty to the Catholic Church. The carelessness of Church order, which so often marks the revivalist of the present day, was of course quite alien to the spirit of Francis. It was, therefore, inevitable that he should very soon come into personal contact with the Pope.

The occupant of the Holy See at that time was Innocent III., who reigned from 1198 to 1216. He was one of the greatest of the Popes, and exercised a great influence on the whole for the good of the Church. He had a "clear intellect, never missed an opportunity, and his calculating spirit rarely erred from its mark. A man of severe and lofty character, which inspired universal respect, he possessed all the qualities of an astute political intriguer." [1] His was the master-mind among

[1] Dr. Creighton.

European rulers: there was no one to compete with him. He made the Papal power felt everywhere. We in England felt it. It was this Innocent who quarrelled with our bad King John over various matters, especially over the appointment of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. He laid England under an Interdict, and brought King John to his knees, making him his vassal. Indirectly we owe partly to Innocent the rise of the spirit of independence on the part of the barons and the Church of England, which procured for us the great Charter of our liberties, for the Pope when he had conquered the king used his power over him against the nation. This was the great man who was now to be brought face to face with the simple-minded Friars, and was to decide whether he would blot them out of existence or use them for God and the Church. Any suspicion of heresy would of course have been fatal to the prospects of Francis. The Pope was well aware of the evil in the Church of which we have spoken, but he was also aware that most of the attempts at reform had ended with disastrous inroads into the unity of Christendom. To impair that sacred unity ordained by our Lord Himself was to the mind of Innocent quite as great an evil as simony, or the holding of pluralities, or the taking of bribes. But he was on the look-out for fresh zeal that could be effectually directed towards a reformation.

It was in the summer of the year 1210 that

Francis and his Brothers resolved to go to Rome with their Rule. This original Rule is not extant, but it is probable that it was practically little else than those passages of the Gospel to which we have already referred. Besides these there would probably have been various precepts about preaching and begging and manual labour, and also the title of the community "Brothers Minor." "Minores" simply meant "Poor," or as we should say, the "Lower Orders." The Friars desired to be called the poor men, nothing more; they would share the life and the name of the common people. They were twelve in number like the original Apostles of Christ. Their leader on this occasion was Bernard, the first companion of Francis. The request which Francis made at the Court of Rome was a very simple one. He asked to be allowed to lead a life in accordance with the plain precepts of the Gospel, with the approval of the Holy Father. The cardinal whose business it was to examine them was favourably impressed with their evident loyalty to the Church, but he was against the foundation of a new society, and strongly advised the Brothers to join one of the already existing monastic orders. This was just what Francis could not possibly bring himself to do: it would have quenched all his enthusiasm and rendered him impotent. The cardinal then introduced him to the Pope, saying—

"I have found a man of the highest perfection, who desires to live in conformity with the Holy

Gospel and observe evangelical perfection in all things. I believe that by him the Lord intends to reform the faith of the Holy Church throughout the whole world."

There are many legends about this interview; some relate that Innocent was disgusted at the appearance of Francis at first, and told him to go to the pigs and read his Rule to them, which he immediately did, rolling himself in the dirt of the pig-sty; others relate that he was very kind to the Friars, but expressed his fear that the proposed Rule was too hard.

Bidding Francis pray for guidance, he sent him away for the present. The cardinals discussed the matter with the Pope, and one of them observed that if to carry out the Gospel life was to be looked upon as unreasonable, they were guilty of blaspheming against our Lord, the author of the Gospel.

A second audience was granted to Francis, who then pleaded his cause in a parable thus—

"There was in the wilderness a very poor and very beautiful woman. A great king, desiring to have beautiful children, married her. Many fair sons were born to the king by her, and when they were grown up the woman sent them to the court, saying, 'Fear not, you are the king's own children, he will receive you.'

"When they arrived at the court the king, seeing their likeness to himself, asked them whose children they were. When he heard that their

mother was this beautiful woman of the wilderness, he joyfully received them, saying, 'Fear not, for you are my own sons; if strangers eat at my table, much more shall you who are my lawful sons.'

"Most holy father," said Francis, "I am this poor woman whom God in His love has condescended to make beautiful and of whom He has been pleased to have lawful sons. The King of kings has told me that He will provide for all the sons which He may have of me, for if He sustains bastards, how much more His true sons!"

This was a bold parable. It implied that the mass of the clergy were untrue sons, the little family of Friars with their desire to reproduce the Gospel life, the real legitimate offspring of the Church.[1]

Innocent was much impressed. Whether or not the story of his dream is true, in which he saw in prophetic vision the Church supported by Dominic and Francis, anyhow he felt that he was in the presence of one who felt himself called by Christ to do what he pleaded for. The Pope behaved discreetly. He would not lose these men, but he would not give them complete approval. He gave them leave to preach, but he insisted on the appointment of a Superior. "Go, my Brothers," he said, "and may God be with you. Preach repentance to all according as the Lord may inspire you. Then when the Almighty shall have

[1] *Sabat.*, p. 98.

made you increase and prosper, you may come back to us; we will grant what you ask, and then we may perhaps more safely grant you even more than you request."

This is generally called the approbation of the first Rule by Innocent III., but it was hardly so much as that.

The Pope had given sufficient encouragement to Francis to proceed with his work, but he had given no formal approbation. Nevertheless he had taken care to secure these new soldiers for his army. He had the foresight to perceive that it would never do to lose them. He had also tied the first knot of the cord that bound them to the Papacy, as one more religious Order to advance the interests of the "Vicar of Christ," as Innocent called himself. Some may regret that Francis was not left more free, but even had it been better for him as a prophet to have been left alone, it is difficult to see how the Order would have kept within bounds at all had not the authorities of the Church laid their hands upon it at this early stage.

The encouragement they had received from the Holy Father sent them out from Rome with joy and hopefulness. Many troubles met them on their way home, physical sufferings through fever, passing doubts and perplexities of mind, but they overcame them all. Back they came home, preaching as they went, and everywhere impressing crowds with their gospel of penitence and peace. They took up their abode at Rivo-Torto, in

another ruined house which had been a leper hospital. This became one more of the numerous little retreats around Assisi so dear to the heart of Francis, where he and his Brothers could spend their time in peaceful love together, and from which they could every now and then emerge to preach and tend the sick. To this period of the stay at Rivo-Torto in the years 1210–1211 belong some of the most characteristic of the many stories of Francis.

There was one Brother who "did hardly pray at all, and never worked nor begged alms, but he had a vigorous appetite." Seeing that he was a "carnal" man, Francis bid him depart, saying, "Go, Brother Fly, since thou art minded to eat up the labour of thy Brothers, and to be idle in God's work as a drone that winneth nothing nor worketh, but eateth up the work and labour of the good bees." [1]

On another occasion in the middle of the night a certain Brother was heard to cry out, "I am dying. I am dying!" Francis called for a light and went to his bedside. "I am dying," he said, "of hunger." Then Francis got some food, and not to let the poor Brother feel uncomfortable, he ate the food with him, after which he gave his Brother a little sermon on the proper care of the body, seeing that they were all inclined to afflict themselves too severely. Nevertheless, as Brother Leo remarks,

[1] *Spec.*, xxiv.

Francis himself from the beginning of his conversion to the end of his life was always austere towards his own body, although he was by nature feeble, and when in the world had been accustomed to feed delicately.[1]

It was at Rivo-Torto also that the incident already mentioned, of Brother Giles and the poor ill-clad man, took place.

The news of their reception by the Pope had soon spread to Assisi, and it raised the Friars immeasurably in the eyes of their fellow-townsmen. The Cathedral was put at their disposal for preaching, and the greatest excitement prevailed. The mission of Francis was somewhat like the mission of S. John the Baptist. All classes flocked to listen to him, and, not content with a mere emotional "conversion," they asked him what they should practically do as a result of repentance. He boldly told the tradesmen to give up their ill-gotten gains, and those who were at enmity to make peace. Like the Christian Socialists of the present day, he desired "to present Christ in practical life as the living Master and King, the Enemy of wrong and selfishness, the Power of righteousness and love."

Hence when he found his native city rent in twain with quarrels between rich and poor, "majores and minores," he could not remain an inactive spectator, talking about love and brother-

[1] *Spec.*, xxvii.

hood without seeking to realize them, still less could he pander to the upper classes by withholding the whole message of Christ for fear of offence. He came out boldly between the contending parties, and was accepted as their arbiter. On November 9, 1210, an agreement was signed, dictated by Francis, the original of which has been discovered among the archives of the town. It begins thus—

"In the Name of God. May the supreme grace of the Holy Spirit assist us. To the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Virgin Mary, the Emperor Otho, and Duke Leopold.

"This is the statute, and perpetual agreement between the majori and minori of Assisi."

All alliances in future were to be made only "with a common accord," "for the honour, safety, and advantage of the commune of Assisi." The majori were to renounce their feudal rights, the villagers subject to Assisi were given equal rights with the townsfolk, the assessment of taxes was fixed.[1]

For a long time after this remarkable agreement peace was secured, and mainly through the efforts of Francis. Here then we find the revivalist preacher in the thick of mission work, doing what now-a-days would be called a most important piece of political work. How different is our modern idea

[1] *Sabat.*, p. 118.

of a Christian missionary! Many of us would call it "unspiritual" if a preacher in one of our big towns were to come straight from his "penitent-form," or his "inquiry-room," to settle a strike, or to deliver a speech at an election for the County Council, or to sit on a commission relating to Commercial Morality, or the Sweating System, or the Housing of the Poor. To Francis nothing was "secular" except what was sinful; he could not understand a Gospel that was not meant to penetrate into human life at every point. The present day custom, by which men "put their religion in one water-tight compartment and their politics in another," was unknown to this simple, prayerful, human saint.

CHAPTER VI

PORTIUNCULA

In the spring of 1211 the Friars quitted Rivo-Torto and found a new home at their beloved Portiuncula, which in the nick of time was handed over to them in perpetuity by the Benedictine Abbat and monks to whom it belonged.

It is quaintly told how "Francis, as a wise and thrifty master, being minded that his house, to wit, the Religion, should be founded upon a firm rock, that is, upon an exceeding great poverty, sent yearly to the said Abbat and his monks a basketful of the little fishes that be called roaches, yearly in token of great humility and poverty for that the brethren had no place for their own. . . . But when the brethren carried the little fishes to the monks yearly, they, by reason of the humility of the blessed Francis, that did this of his own free will, gave them a vessel full of oil."[1]

For the next ten years this was their home, and

[1] *Spec.*, lv.

it has ever since been rightly regarded as the very centre of the Franciscan movement, being the place of the conversion of Francis and the shrine where the Brothers worshipped during what has been called the "heroic period" of their history.

This may be a good point at which to make some more general remarks on the life of the early Friars. It was a life of labour. We speak of the Friars as mendicants, but the idleness which was later on the result of their beggary was by no means characteristic of them at first. Francis never meant to produce an army of shiftless tramps. When on their missions they begged for food, enough food to give them strength to do their work; but at ordinary times they laboured with their hands to support themselves. It was a labouring Order. The lukewarm and lazy, Francis used to say, would be vomited out of God's mouth. Any idle man appearing before him was at once rebuked. "I will," he said, "that all my brethren should labour and exercise them humbly in good works so that we be less burdensome to men, and that neither heart nor tongue rove abroad in idleness. Let them that know nothing learn to work." They did all kinds of work: some did domestic work as servants, some carried water, some sold faggots and fruit, some gathered olives; they were ready in fact to do any honest work to support life. Of course there was no idea of "making money" or acquiring luxuries. Poverty was the fundamental principle of the life. Francis looked upon it as a positive joy

to be acquired. Poverty was to him a treasure; not an evil to be endured, but a priceless gem to be possessed.

He personified Poverty as his Bride, his Lady to whom he had vowed eternal love and devotion. She had been living in widowhood since the days of the New Testament. He was the knight who had rescued her and wooed her and made her his own. Poverty was no sordid, sad, miserable state from which men should shrink; riches and worldliness were the sad things of earth that led to trouble and vexation of spirit. Poverty was the happy state of life in which men were set free from the trammels of conventionalism and could breathe the pure air of God's love. In poverty Francis found himself at home with the mass of his fellow-men, he was able really to share their life and raise them to the true level of their manhood as revealed in the perfect Man, Jesus Christ.

It was this novel conception of the true human life as being richest inwardly when poorest outwardly, as being at its best when most independent of external circumstances, which made such an impression upon the *blasé* world of that day. In the midst of all the quarrelling rich and the covetous poor, Francis stepped down on to the stage and spoke one word that arrested the attention of every one. "Be poor," he said. "Try a new principle of life altogether; be utterly careless of 'having and getting'; try 'being' for a change." The world paused and looked. It saw these few

Brothers living as they taught, being what they proposed, having nothing and yet possessing all things worth possessing.[1]

Later on, as we shall see, the ideal of absolute poverty was departed from, to the great grief of Francis, but it is most important to realize that in the beginning it was the very foundation on which he desired to build everything. It was a rule from which no deviation was to be allowed except in the direst necessity: it was the very pith and marrow of his Gospel.

This can be clearly proved by reading any of his earliest sayings on the subject, as they have been faithfully preserved to us by Brother Leo in the *Mirror of Perfection*. For example, when the priest-friars had taken to possessing books, and Francis was asked if this were right, he replied, "Brothers, I say unto thee that this was and is my first intention and my last will, if only the Brothers would have believed me, that no Brother ought to have anything save his habit as our Rule alloweth with girdle and hose."[2] "Ye would fain appear before men as Brethren Minor, and be called observants of the Holy Gospel, but in your works would ye fain have treasure chests."[3] So also, when a novice asked him if it would be right for him to possess a psalm-book, Francis replied sadly, though also with a certain grim humour, "After that thou shalt have had the psalm-book, thou wilt

[1] See Introduction. [2] *Spec.*, ii.
[3] *Spec.*, iii.

be covetous and want to have a Breviary too, and when thou hast got a Breviary thou wilt sit in a chair like a great prelate, and wilt say to thy brother, 'Fetch me my Breviary!'"[1]

Again, Francis "taught his brethren to make their dwellings after a sorry sort, and would that their cabins should be of wood, not stone, and these constructed and built after a mean pattern, and not only did he hate arrogance in their houses, but he did exceedingly abhor much or choice furnishing thereof. He had no liking for aught in tables or vessels that was of worldly seeming and whereby remembrance of the world might be recalled, so as that all things might point toward poverty as their end and intent, and all things chant songs of pilgrimage and exile."[2]

Once when a Brother had prepared a cell in which Francis might be alone and pray in peace, he was rebuked by the saint for calling it *his* cell. "Because thou hast said it is *my* cell, henceforward," he said, "another shall stay in it and not I. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."[3]

On another occasion when an old woman came to beg of the Friars, Francis caused the only copy of the New Testament to be given her to sell, believing as he said that it would be more pleasing to our Lord that they should give it to her than that they should read out of it.[4]

[1] *Spec.*, iv. [2] *Spec.*, v.
[3] *Spec.*, ix. [4] *Spec.*, xxxviii.

There was no acting about this kind of thing. Francis really shared the life of the poor and felt with them. He was very much grieved when any dishonour was done to the poor. Once when a poor sick man met him, the Brother walking with him, being a little suspicious, made an unkind remark, suggesting that though the man was doubtless very poor he would like to be rich if he could. Francis was so much displeased at this remark that he made the Brother cast off his habit and go and kneel before the poor man and confess to him what he had done. Then Francis said to the penitent Brother, "Wouldst thou know how thou didst sin against him, yea rather, against Christ? When thou seest a poor man, thou oughtest to bethink thee of Him in Whose name he cometh, to wit, Christ that did take upon Himself our poverty and infirmity, for his sickness and poverty be as it were a mirror unto us, wherein we may look and with pity perceive the sickness and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

Here we see the characteristic desire of Francis to see Christ in every one, to imitate Christ in everything. His own asceticism was no morbid self-torture, but rather a voluntary taking upon himself of suffering and pain in imitation of our Lord. He would not allow himself any luxury, and would never allow people to think him more austere than he really was. Once when he had

[1] *Spec.*, xxxvii.

been very ill and had had a few extra comforts in the way of food, he insisted on confessing this publicly in the open square. He ordered one Brother to drag him naked into the crowd and another to cast ashes over his face; and all this in the cold of winter, and when he was not yet quite recovered of his illness. Another time he publicly confessed that he had eaten cakes in Lent; another time when a Brother had sewn a piece of fox-skin inside his habit to make him a little warmer, he requested that a piece of the skin might be sewn outside also that all men should know that he was indulging in luxury. He would never spoil himself in any way. He was so devout when saying his prayers that he would never even lean against a door while at them; when riding he would always get off his horse, even in pelting rain, to say his Office.

"If the body," he said, "would fain eat his meat, that with the body itself doth become the food of worms, in peace and quiet, with how much peace and quiet and with how great reverence and devotion ought the soul to receive the food that is God Himself."[1]

In his first Rule he wrote, "I beseech my brethren that in their infirmities they be not wroth nor troubled either against God or against the brethren, and that they be not solicitous to ask for medicines nor too desirous to relieve this flesh that so soon must die."[2]

[1] *Spec.*, xciv. [2] *Spec.*, xlii.

Nevertheless he did not despise the body, though he knew its dangers. The following passage perhaps shows us best the mind of Francis in this matter.

"The servant of God," he said one day, "in eating and drinking and sleeping and supplying the other necessities of the body, ought to satisfy his body with discretion, in such sort as that Brother Body shall have no right to murmur, saying, 'I cannot stand upright and attend to prayer, nor be cheerful in tribulations of the mind, nor work other good works, for that thou dost not satisfy my needs.' For if that the servant of God were to be negligent and sluggish and sleepy in prayer, in vigils and good works, then ought he to chastise him as a bad and lazy mule, for that he is willing enough to eat but unwilling to be of any profit and to carry his burden." [1]

"Brother Ass," as he called his body, was to be kept in order, not uselessly and aimlessly tortured, but disciplined and kept ready for the Master's use.

And the work that the Friars were called upon to do required considerable toughness and vigour. We have already noticed that their main work was the twofold duty of tending lepers and renovating churches. They used to live in the leper hospitals. Brother James the Simple was the chief attendant on these unfortunate "brother Christians," or "God's patients," as they were called. One day Brother James brought a party of them to the

[1] *Spec.*, xcvii.

Portiuncula, not thinking he was doing anything wrong. Francis, however, considering it a mistake to have brought one of the most loathsome of the lepers out in public, reproved him, saying, "Thou shouldst not lead these Christians abroad, for it is not decent neither for thee nor for them." Then being vexed with himself for having said this, and thinking it might have made the poor leper feel uncomfortable, nothing would satisfy him but to make amends for his want of charity by sitting next to him at table and eating from the same dish! The leper was covered with sores, and his fingers were bleeding with which he helped himself from the dish, yet Francis did not flinch from going through to the end with his self-inflicted penance.[1]

The other work of restoring and cleansing churches was also very dear to the heart of Francis. He could not bear to see God's sanctuary unclean, and he would go about with a broom from church to church. After preaching he would call the priests together, and first looking very carefully to see that there were no laymen by who would be scandalized at his reproving the clergy, he would give a short address on the duty of keeping the churches clean, and especially all that had to do with the altar.

This life of the Friars, though strict and hardy, was at the same time one of intense joy and

[1] *Spec.*, lviii.

happiness. Francis would have no gloomy looks among them.[1] Even a Brother mourning outwardly over his sins would be told to keep his sadness to himself. "It becometh not a servant of God before his Brother or any other to show sadness and a troubled countenance." The servant of God must study "to keep both inwardly and outwardly the spiritual cheerfulness that ariseth out of cleanness of heart, and is obtained by devoutness of prayer." The devils can find no entrance by which they can get into a man to hurt him if he be cheerful both in tribulation and in prosperity!

The stories of the love and inexhaustible good-nature of Francis are so numerous that it is difficult to know which to choose to tell again. He was continually giving away parts of his clothing to cover the ragged and ill-clad whom he met. Once, when he was wearing a bit of cloth round his neck which a friend had lent him, he met a poor woman. He at once took off the cloth and told her to make a covering for herself from it. The old lady ran off with it, fearing that he might change his mind and ask for it back, but presently she returned, saying it was too small for the purpose. Then Francis turned to his companion, who was wearing another piece of cloth, and said, "Thou hearest what this poor woman saith. For the love of God let us bear with the cold and give that piece of cloth to the poor woman."[2]

[1] He himself, as a French writer puts it, had "*toujours le cœur en fête.*"

[2] *Spec.*, xxix.

At another time a poor man came and begged for a piece of cloth. But when the Brother could not find any to give him, Francis got a knife and began cutting off a piece of his own habit for him. This was at the time of which we shall speak soon, when Francis had given up the office of Superior, and was himself under obedience to another Brother. He was ordered to stop cutting up his clothes, which of course he did at once, but he pleaded so hard for the poor man that the Brothers had to join together and cut off pieces from their habits to make up a present of cloth for the man.[1]

Obedience was very strict among the Friars now, but it was not of the rigid, despotic kind such as is customary among the Jesuits. There was practically no novitiate and very little formal Rule at first. Francis put before his followers the Gospel Life, and left them considerable freedom in carrying it out. He could not understand any one joining the Order who was not prepared to obey. He believed that when a Brother had once given himself to God, then the Holy Spirit would become his Superior and tell him what to do.

The highest obedience, the obedience wherein flesh and blood have nought of their own, he believed to be therein by divine inspiration. Men do go among the infidels either for the profit of their neighbours or for the desire of martyrdom; yea, and to ask for this obedience he deemed to be right acceptable unto God.[2]

[1] *Spec.*, xxxv.

[2] *Spec.*, xlviii.

The office of Superior he looked upon as most sacred, as representing the will of God; every Brother was bound to obey absolutely. The truly obedient Religious he compared to a corpse,[1] that "resenteth not being moved, nor changeth its position, nor crieth out when it is let go." Nevertheless he deprecated putting a brother "on his obedience," except as a last resort. The Superior should be quite sure that he is himself doing the will of God in giving an order. But if the order was once given, then it was to be obeyed without a murmur. "He that hasteneth not to obey an order given on his obedience neither feareth God nor reverenceth man." "What case is more hopeless than that of a Religious who doth neglect and despise his obedience."[2]

It was not however Francis' desire to produce a mechanical regiment of well-drilled soldiers so much as a family of loving Brothers. His own obedience to our Lord was so spontaneous and generous that he could hardly believe that any one having once come across the Gospel, and felt it to be addressed to him, would ever wish to go back from it, or could ever disobey it wilfully. This family of his was to impress the world by its life rather than by its preaching. Hence we always find Francis inculcating the greatest care about

[1] This comparison is generally considered to have originated with the Jesuits, but S. Francis used it three hundred years before S. Ignatius Loyola. See note on p. 20.

[2] *Spec.*, xlix.

the behaviour of the Friars, or what the Bible calls "conversation," manner of life. Some of the Brothers once complained to him that the bishops of the various places to which they went were very slow to allow them to preach (for no Friar would ever preach in a place without leave), and they suggested that he should apply to the Pope for a special privilege. The answer of Francis was remarkable. "Ye Brothers Minor, ye know not the will of God, nor will ye allow me to convert the whole world as God willeth, for I am minded first of all to convert the prelates themselves by holy humility and reverence, so that when they shall see our holy life and our humble reverence towards them, they shall ask you to preach and convert the people, and call them together to hear your preaching, better than your privileges that will only lead you on to pride. . . . As for me, I am fain to have this privilege of the Lord, that never may I have any privilege from man, save only the privilege to do reverence unto all, and to convert mankind through obedience to our Holy Rule, rather by example than by word."[1]

So again in answer to a Dominican Friar who asked him to explain the passage in Ezekiel which troubled him: "If thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way, his soul will I require at thy hand." Francis replied, "If it be that the word is to be understood generally, I take it in

[1] *Spec.*, l.

such wise as that the servant of God ought so to burn and strive in his life and holiness in himself, that by the tongue of his holy conversation he may be a rebuke unto all the wicked."[1]

Very often a gentle reproof from Francis, or the mere sight of his love and humility, would convert people. Thus when he came across a poor man who was writhing under an injustice which he had suffered from his lord, and was breathing out curses against him, Francis said to him, "Brother, for the love of God, forgive thy lord, that thou mayst set free thy soul, and it may be that he will give thee back the things he hath taken from thee, otherwise thou hast lost thy things and wilt lose thy soul." Then the man said, "I cannot forgive him unless he give me back the things he hath taken from me." Then Francis said, "Behold, I give thee this cloak, and I pray thee for the love of the Lord God that thou forgive thy lord."

"And forsooth his heart was sweetened, and moved thereunto by the favour, he did forgive his lord the wrongs he had done him."[2]

On another occasion, at the bidding of Francis, some of the Brothers converted some robbers in a most simple fashion. They took them bread and wine, and called out to them saying, "Brother robbers, come unto us for that we be brethren and bring to you good bread and good wine."

Then after their meal they talked to them of

[1] *Spec.*, liii. [2] *Spec.*, xxxii.

holy things, and asked them to promise not to steal any more or murder any one.

Then on another day they took them some more food and again called the robbers, trusting them that they had kept their promise. In this way by sheer love they won the robbers' hearts, and some joined the Order, others making their confession and giving up their bad life.[1]

If anything could vex Francis it was to see some unedifying act, or to hear some unedifying word from his Brothers in the company of others. But it was a great joy to him when without his telling them what to do they of their own accord showed how they had acquired the spirit of the Order. For example, one day a Brother insulted another in the presence of a nobleman. But when he saw that his Brother was much hurt by his cruel words, he was so displeased with himself that he took some of the dung of an ass and thrust it into his mouth, saying—

"Eat thou of the dung, thou tongue that didst shed the venom of wrath upon thy Brother." As to which, we are told, the nobleman was much astonished and lost in admiration.

And whenever any Brother uttered a word against another, he straightway knelt and kissed the foot of the one he had offended.

Francis maintained that his Brothers were "sent by our Lord in these last days to show ensamples

[1] *Spec.*, lxi.

of life to them that were covered round about by the darkness of their sins. He would say that he was full of the sweetest smells and anointed with the virtue of precious ointment, whensoever he heard the brave deeds of the holy brethren that were scattered about the world."[1]

Here is another saying of Francis pointing the same lesson. "Our life in the midst of the world ought to be such that on hearing or seeing us, every one shall feel constrained to praise our heavenly Father. You proclaim peace; have it in your hearts. Be not an occasion of wrath or scandal to any one, but by your gentleness may all be led to peace, concord, and good works."

He was especially careful to insist on great respect being paid to the clergy. He knew the dangers of enthusiasm, how it had led the Waldenses and others into revolt against the established order, how easy it is to get into a habit of finding fault with those who do not observe as strict a life as one's own, or, as it has been put in modern times, how easy for "Publicans to thank God they are not as the Pharisees." "We are sent," said Francis, "to succour the clergy for the salvation of souls, and whatsoever in them is found wanting should be supplied by us. But let each receive his wages not according to the authority he holdeth, but according to the work he doeth. Know ye this, brethren, that the gain of souls is most grateful to

[1] *Spec.*, li.

God, and this gain we can better make with the peace of the clergy than by being at discordance with them. But if they hinder the salvation of the people, vengeance is God's and He will repay them in due time, wherefore be ye subject unto your superiors and take heed as far as in you lieth that no evil jealousy arise between you. If ye be sons of peace, ye shall win both clergy and people, and this is more acceptable with God than to win the people only and to scandalize the clergy. Cover their slips and supply their many defects; and when ye have done this be ye therefore yourselves the more humble."[1]

Francis, like his Master, "knew what was in man," he knew man's weakness and yet he never despaired of him. "There are men," he said, "who to-day appear to us to be members of the devil, who one day shall be members of Christ."

It was this extraordinary hopefulness about others which made him and his Friars so courageous and daring in their mission work. There was no limit to his expectation of what the Gospel could do. This led him to make up his mind to convert the Saracen infidels. In the year 1212 he started off to the East, but was obliged to return owing to stress of weather, and thus his "Crusade" was postponed for a time, and he contented himself with more mission work in Italy. It was about this time or a little later that he met a nobleman by

[1] *Spec.*, liv.

name Orlando dei Cattani, Count of Chiusi in Casentino. It was he who gave to the Order the mountain of the Verna as a retreat, a beautiful and solitary spot which was shortly to become famous, as we shall see in the history of Francis. Of the mission of Francis to Spain and Morocco, which also took place about this time, we have very few details. During all this period, 1210—1216, the Friars were spreading all over the country, holding missions, preaching in the market-places, and mixing with the people in friendly intercourse. The rapid increase of the Order was marvellous, though it must be borne in mind that unlike the old Orders it required no regular novitiate. Men came to Francis, gave up all, accepted the literal Gospel as their Rule, and very soon found themselves preaching and furthering the movement generally after the common Franciscan pattern. They had no need to spend time over rearing large monasteries: any little hut or group of huts would do for them: all they required was a quiet place to pray in, and from which they might emerge at intervals to carry the message to their neighbours.

It must not however be supposed that no troubles and anxieties overtook the Friars in their early days. Francis himself was sometimes seized with terrible fits of depression. On one occasion (probably in 1215) he was beset by very serious doubts as to his exact vocation, "whether to give himself wholly to prayer or else to preaching." The story of this and what followed from it is so beautifully told in the *Fioretti* or *Little Flowers* of S. Francis that it seems best to give it in extracts from the translation.

"On this matter he much wished to learn the will of God. . . . Wherefore he called Brother Masseo and bespake him thus: 'Go unto Sister Clare, and tell her on my behalf, that she with certain of her most spiritual companions should pray devoutly unto God, that it may please Him to show me which of the twain is the better; whether to give myself to preaching or wholly unto prayer. And then go unto Brother Sylvester and tell the like unto him.' . . . So Brother Masseo departed, and according to the bidding of S. Francis carried his message first unto Sister Clare and then unto Brother Sylvester. . . . Brother Masseo returned with this reply: 'As unto Brother Sylvester so likewise unto Sister Clare and her sisters, has Christ made answer and revealed: that it is His Will that thou go throughout the world to preach, since He hath chosen thee not for thyself alone, but also for the salvation of others.' And then S. Francis . . . rose up with fervour exceeding great, and said: 'Let us be going in the name of God'; and he took for his companions Brother Masseo and Brother Agnolo, holy men. . . . They came unto a little town called Saturniano, and S. Francis set himself to preach, but first he bade the swallows that were twittering keep silence till such time as he had done the preaching, and the swallows were obedient to his word. . . . And as with great fervour he was going on the way, he lifted up

his eyes and beheld some trees whereon sat a great number of birds well-nigh without number: whereat S. Francis marvelled, and said to his companions: 'Ye shall wait for me here upon the way, and I will go to preach unto my little sisters the birds.' And he went into the field and began to preach unto the birds that were on the ground; and immediately those that were on the trees flew down to him, and they all of them remained still and quiet together, until S. Francis made an end of his preaching: and not even then did he depart until he had given them his blessing. . . . The sermon that S. Francis preached unto them was after this fashion: 'My little sisters, the birds, much bounden are ye unto God, your Creator, and alway in every place ought ye to praise Him for that He hath given you liberty to fly about everywhere, and hath also given you double and triple raiment; moreover He preserved your seed in the ark of Noah, that your race might not perish out of the world; still more are ye beholden unto Him for the element of the air which He hath appointed for you; beyond all this ye sow not neither do ye reap; and God feedeth you, and giveth you the streams and fountains for your drink; the mountains and the valleys for your refuge, and the high trees whereon to make your nests; and because ye know not how to spin or sew, God clotheth you, you and your children; wherefore your Creator loveth you much, seeing that He hath bestowed on you so many benefits: and therefore, my little sisters, beware of the sin of

ingratitude, and study always to give praises unto God.' When as S. Francis spake these words to them, those birds began all of them to open their beaks, and stretch their necks and spread their wings, and reverently bend their heads down to the ground, and by their acts and by their songs to show that the holy father gave them joy exceeding great. . . . At the last, having ended the preaching, he made over them the sign of the cross and gave them leave to go away."[1]

This simple story enables us perhaps better than any other to picture to ourselves the purity and love of Francis. We feel we are in the presence of a human nature as near the spotless Humanity of our Lord as any man has ever had. The miracles of Francis are, to use Biblical language, "signs," signs of power over nature which belongs to innocence and sweetness when consecrated to God. He moved about in the world of nature with an extraordinary sympathy for everything he saw or felt, animate or inanimate. The sun, the moon, the flowers, the birds were his "brothers" and "sisters." All nature seems to have responded to his touch. We have in the nature-stories of Francis a kind of fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, "a little child shall lead them": "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

Could anything be more tender than such words as these? "Little sisters, turtle-doves," he said,

[1] *Fioretti*, xvi.

holding some in his tunic, "you are simple, innocent, and chaste; why did you let yourselves be caught? I shall save you from death, and have nests made for you, so that you may bring forth young and multiply according to the commandment of your Creator."

Or this to a leveret rescued from a trap and running to him for protection.

"Come to me, brother leveret," and he took it up and caressed it, and finally put it on the ground that it might run away; but it returned to him again and again, so that he was obliged to send it to the neighbouring forest before it would consent to return to freedom.

Or this, when a large fish had been presented to him by a fisherman who was rowing him over a lake: "he accepted it with joy, but to the great amazement of the fisherman put it back into the water, bidding it bless God."

Whatever our views may be as to modern vivisection, it is quite certain that Francis would have been horrified at the very idea.

This short and most inadequate sketch will have given the reader some idea of what the magic influence of Francis and his early Friars was. Let us now take up the thread of history again from the year 1215.

CHAPTER VII

THE GENERAL CHAPTERS

THE Portiuncula was the general trysting-place of the Friars. At regular times they gathered there after their various missions to receive guidance and encouragement from Francis.

It was about the year 1216 that regular Chapters began to be held biennially, viz. at Pentecost and Michaelmas. The most famous of these meetings is known in history as the "Chapter of Mats," so called because the five thousand Friars who are said to have assembled on that occasion slept in the open air under roofs of willows and on rush mats. "Their bed was the bare ground, and for such as had it a little straw; their pillows were stones or logs of wood."

It is probable that many of the incidents narrated in connection with this Chapter took place at some of the earlier and later meetings, but have been all collected under this one name.

Cardinal Ugolino was present at this Chapter, and also the great S. Dominic. Before we give the

story of the "Chapter of Mats" it may be well to note what had been taking place between Francis and the Papal authorities since his first interview with Innocent III. The Pope, it will be remembered, had only given a provisional authorization of the Rule. From the first it had always been the wish of the cardinals that the Friars should adopt one of the old Monastic Rules, or at least that they should conform more nearly to the ancient precedents of Religious Orders. Francis consistently set his face against this, though, as we shall see, the pressure was so strong that his wishes were eventually for the most part over-ruled. He objected strongly to the fashion of asking "privileges" from the Court of Rome,[1] he wished that his Friars might never be made bishops or high ecclesiastical dignitaries, he disliked big monasteries and rich churches, he discouraged learned theologians from joining the Order, and above all things he could not bear any deviation from the Rule of strict poverty. In all this he was strongly supported by the more spiritually-minded Friars, such as Brother Leo, Brother Giles, and Brother Juniper. On the other side and in support of the policy of the Papal Court was a most remarkable man, Brother Elias. As we have already noticed he is supposed to have been the unnamed companion of Francis in the early days of his conversion. Whether this was so or not, he was devoted to

[1] See, however, p. 93.

his master, for whom he had a most intense admiration, while at the same time holding very different views from him as to the ultimate aim of the Order. Brother Elias had a masterful mind. He was a great contrast to the simple, guileless Francis. He was full of imperialistic ideas, and pictured to himself an orderly, disciplined army of Friars, devoted to the interests of the Church, scientifically managed, with a modified Rule of poverty, more commonplace perhaps, but more possible for the average man.

Cardinal Ugolino also had a great love for Francis, personally; but he too represented the side of rigid ecclesiasticism and Papal authority. There were, says M. Sabatier, two men in him, "The Christian who felt himself subdued before Francis; the prelate, that is, a man whom the glory of the Church sometimes caused to forget the glory of God."[1] In 1216 he became the official protector of the Franciscan Order. He was anxious to get Francis to apply for a formal confirmation of the Rule. Honorius III., a most saintly man, was now Pope, and it was arranged that Francis should preach before him. The "little poor man" prepared a suitable discourse for this great event; but when the time came for him to deliver it, he forgot it, and was obliged to give an extempore address, which however made a great impression on the Pope.

The Pope was from the first disposed to favour

[1] *Sabat.*, p. 164.

the Brothers Minor, being himself a practical observer of poverty. He is described as "a good and religious old man, very simple and kindly; who had given to the poor almost all that he had."[1]

Francis expected great things from this new Pope, whose sympathy with "Holy Poverty" was so well known. Only a few days after the accession of Honorius he made a bold request of the Pope to grant what is known as the "Indulgence of the Portiuncula." The story is as follows—

"One night when Francis was praying in his beloved chapel of S. Mary of the Angels, it was revealed to him by our Lord that he was to go to the Supreme Pontiff Honorius, who at that time happened to be at Perugia, to request of him an indulgence for the Church of S. Mary of the Portiuncula, which he had himself repaired. On rising the next morning he called Brother Masseo, and with him set out for Perugia. Arrived there, he presented himself before Honorius, and said, 'Holy Father, I have lately repaired for you a church in honour of the Virgin Mother of Christ, and I implore your Holiness to place there an indulgence without oblations.'"

This request surprised the Pope beyond measure, because at that time every indulgence required an "oblation," *i.e.* an offering to be made by the person seeking it. Francis, however, was anxious that spiritual blessings in connection with his

[1] Jacques de Vitry, quoted in *Un Nouveau Chapitre*, p. 11.

Order should be open to all upon their sincere penitence, without any pecuniary condition. He wanted nothing for his Brothers except the joy of knowing that sinners had found peace.

The Pope was puzzled, but instead of refusing outright, he asked Francis for how many years the indulgence was to be, and what its conditions were to be?

To his still greater amazement Francis replied, "It is not years, but souls I plead for." And the Lord Pope said, "How do you mean, 'souls'?" Blessed Francis answered, "I desire, if your Holiness permits it, that whosoever shall come to the Church, penitent for their sins, having made their confession and received absolution, shall obtain remission both from their penalty and guilt, in heaven and on earth, from the day of their baptism until the day and hour of their entry into the aforesaid Church."

The Lord Pope replied, "It is much that you ask, Francis, for it is not the custom of the Roman Court to grant any such indulgence as this."

Blessed Francis answered, "My Lord, what I ask is not on my own behalf, but on behalf of Him Who sent me, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Then the Lord Pope immediately consented, saying three times over, "I grant what you ask."

But the Lord Cardinals who were present thus addressed the Pope—

"Do you see, Holy Father, that in granting such an indulgence as this you are destroying the value

of the Crusade indulgence, and even that of the Apostles Peter and Paul itself?"

To which the Pope replied, "We have given and granted it to him, and it is not expedient to destroy what has been done. But we will so far modify it that it shall extend to one day only."

The Pope then granted the indulgence to take effect for one day, that is, from first vespers of the Feast of the Dedication to second vespers of the following day.

Then blessed Francis bowed his head and started to leave the palace. "Oh, simpleton," said Honorius, "where are you off to? What pledge have you got for this indulgence?" This he said because no formal document had been given him granting the favour. But blessed Francis replied—

"Your word is enough for me; if this is the work of God it is for Him to manifest His work; I want no instruments."

Then with joy he returned home with his companion.

On his way back Francis lay down to rest for a time, and when he awoke he called Brother Masseo to him and said, "Brother, I tell thee God has shown me that this indulgence which the Supreme Pontiff has granted me to-day has been ratified in Heaven."[1]

[1] I have taken this story chiefly from the account given by Theobald, Bishop of Assisi, quoted in Sabatier's *Tractatus de Indulgentia S. Mariæ de Portiuncula* (Paris, 1900), p. lxxvii, Introd. It is interesting to note that M. Sabatier rejected the whole story in his first edition of the *Life of S. Francis*, but has now entirely altered his opinion.

Two things should be noticed with regard to the above story. According to our modern English notions the whole idea of such an indulgence seems almost repulsive, whereas to Francis it meant a most real spiritual benefaction to the poor sinners who attended the Friars' church. We must not therefore attempt to judge him. And most certainly if we insist on passing judgment we must first of all be quite sure that we understand what an indulgence claims to be. Most English people, and generally those who are most ready to condemn Roman Catholics, have a very misty idea of what it is at which they are so disgusted.[1]

In the second place it is natural to ask, "Why if Francis was so much opposed to the practice of asking privileges of the Roman Court should he have himself made this huge demand from the Pope?" The answer to this is that the privileges which he forbade his disciples to seek were of quite a different kind. In the thirteenth century it was customary to ask for privileges which conferred some exceptional advantages on persons or property. A Religious Order, for example, would ask for some special privilege for themselves, or for some advantage which could only be got through them. Or again, privileges were sought in return for offerings of money or lands, the "oblations" mentioned in the above story.

These were the kind of "privileges" which

[1] For an excellent statement of the theory of indulgences see Knox-Little's *S. Francis of Assisi*, pp. 187–193.

Francis disliked, and which he foresaw would ruin his Order if hankered after. Now the "Indulgence of the Portiuncula" was entirely different. He sought it solely in the interests of the people, his aim was purely spiritual. He expressly disclaimed all desire for material gain: he would have no oblations connected with it. In fact, we may say that in Francis it was the same spirit that urged him to forbid his Brothers to ask for privileges for the Order, and to make his great request at the hands of Honorius.

In contrast to Francis was the founder of the other great Mendicant Order, S. Dominic.

Dominic was a Spanish priest. He had gone on a mission against the heretics in the south of France. There he had noted the growth of rebellion against the Pope, the ignorance and sloth of the clergy, the worldliness of the prelates, the zeal of the heretics, the selfishness and covetousness of the old Religious Orders, and their estrangement from the poor. He felt the need of a new effort against these evils. He was more ready than Francis to fall in with the views of the Papal Court. He adopted at first the Augustinian Rule. His Order was called the "Order of Preachers," and differed very much in its aims from that of Francis. His object was to combat the heretics by force of argument. His friars were "Domini canes," the Lord's Watch-dogs. He admired Francis most sincerely, and was led to adopt the Rule of Gospel poverty by seeing the wonderful power of it in the case of the Brothers

Minor. It is curious to note that while Dominic began without poverty, and Francis without learning, each in the end copied the other, Dominic adopting poverty, and Francis having to admit learned Friars into his Order.

The story of Dominic's resolution to observe poverty is beautifully told in the *Fioretti*, thus: "Thither (*i.e.* to the Portiuncula) came S. Dominic, head and founder of the Order of the Preaching Brothers, who was then on his way from Borgogna to Rome. And hearing of the congregation of the Chapter that S. Francis was holding on the plain of S. Mary of the Angels, he went to see it with seven brothers of his Order." . . . Then follows the description of the Chapter of Mats, the brothers sitting on the plain in companies, here forty, there a hundred, there eighty, together, "all busied in discourse of God, in prayers, in tears, in works of love, and all abiding in such silence and such modesty that there was heard no noise or sound of contention. Nor was there heard in so great a multitude an idle speech or idle jest, but wheresoe'er a company of brothers was gathered together, they either prayed, or said the Office, and bewailed their sins or those of their benefactors, or discoursed concerning the salvation of souls." . . . So great was the fame of their sanctity, that from the Court of the Pope, which was at that time in Perugia, and from other parts of the Valley of Spoleto, there came many counts, barons, and knights, and other gentle folk, and many country folk, and

cardinals, and bishops, and abbats, with many other clergy, for to see this holy gathering, so great and so humble, such as the world had never seen before, of so many holy men together, and chiefest of all they came to see the head and most holy Father of that holy band, the which had robbed the world of such fair prey, and gathered together so devout and fair a flock to follow in the footsteps of the true Shepherd, Jesus Christ. The Chapter-general seeing them all assembled, the holy Father of all and Minister-general, Saint Francis, in fervour of spirit set forth the Word of God. . . .

"My little children, great things have we promised unto God:

Greater things hath God promised to us:
Let us keep what we have promised:
Let us aspire after what He hath promised:
Pleasure is short:
Punishment is eternal:
Suffering is small:
Glory is infinite:
Many are called:
Few are chosen:
All are judged.

Brothers, while we have time let us do good unto all men."

Then with regard to poverty he said: "I command you by the merit of holy Obedience, all ye who be here gathered together, that no one of you take care or thought for aught to eat, or for aught of the needs of the body, but turn all your thoughts

to prayer and praise of God, and cast all your care for your body upon Him, for He careth tenderly for you." And they all received this commandment with glad hearts and joyful countenance, and when the sermon of S. Francis was done they all fell down in prayer. Whereby S. Dominic, who was present at all these things, marvelled exceedingly at the commandment of S. Francis and deemed him indiscreet, not knowing how to think in what manner so great a multitude could live without taking thought or care for the needs of the body. But the Chief Shepherd, Christ, the Blessed One, desiring to show what care He has for His sheep, and what tender love for His poor ones, straightway put it into the hearts of the folk of Perugia, of Spoleto, of Foligno, of Spello, and of Assisi, and the rest of the country round about, to bring food and drink unto this holy company. And lo! all at once from the parts aforesaid came men with sumpter beasts, horses, and carts, with loads of bread, of wine, of honey-combs, and cheese, and other good things to eat according as the poor of Christ had need. Besides this brought they napkins, pitchers, cups, glasses, and other vessels, to serve the needs of so great a multitude; and he deemed himself blessed who so could bring most, or serve most diligently; in such sort that even the knights and the barons and other gentle folk that came to see did service unto them with great devotion and humility. For the which cause S. Dominic, seeing these things and knowing of a

truth that God's Providence was working in them, humbly repented him that he had falsely judged S. Francis to be indiscreet; and coming before him, he knelt down, and humbly told his fault and added: "Of a truth God hath especial care of these holy poor little ones, and I knew it not; and from now henceforth I promise to observe the holy Gospel poverty; and in the Name of God I curse all the brothers of my Order who in the said Order shall presume to hold property." So was S. Dominic much edified by the faith of the most holy Francis, and by the obedience and the poverty of so great and well-ordered a company, and by the Divine Providence and the rich abundance of all good things.[1]

Dominic carried out his intention in 1220, at which date the Order of Preachers became mendicant Friars.

Another story of Francis and Dominic is as follows: When they were both at Rome together, the Cardinal Ugolino asked them why, if the Apostles and first bishops were poor men, their Friars should not be promoted to high offices in the Church. For a time neither Dominic nor Francis would consent to be the first to reply. At last Dominic answered that as far as in him lay he would never allow that any of his Brothers should obtain a high place of dignity. Then Francis followed, saying, "My Lord, my brethren are called

[1] *Fioretti*, xviii.

'Brothers Minor' on purpose that they should 'never become Brothers Major. . . . If you wish them to bring forth fruit in the Church of God, hold them and keep them in the condition of their calling."

Dominic was so much edified by the humility of Francis that he begged to be allowed to have his girdle, which, when he had received, he wore devoutly ever after. Then they embraced, and Dominic said, "Brother Francis, I would that thy Religion and mine should be made one, and that we should live in the Church under equal conditions." Certainly these loving wishes of the founders were not fulfilled, for the Dominicans and Franciscans in after years became sad and bitter rivals.

Cardinal Ugolino, who was also present at the Chapter, showed very great affection towards Francis, but he was sincerely anxious about the future of the Order. At the Chapter of Whitsuntide 1218,[1] he made some suggestions privately to Francis, voicing the complaints of some of the Friars who were getting discontented with the simplicity of the Rule, and longing to become more like the great Monastic Orders, with their elaborate regulations, and rich houses, and churches, and privileges. Francis took the cardinal into the midst of the Friars and thus addressed them—

"My Brothers, the Lord has called me into the ways of simplicity and humility. In them he has

[1] The story in the *Fioretti* evidently mixes up the incidents of at least two Chapters, viz. 1216 and 1218.

shown me the truth for myself and for those who desire to believe and follow me; do not then come speaking to me of the Rule of S. Benedict, of S. Augustine, of S. Bernard, or of any other, but solely of that which God in His mercy has seen fit to show to me, and of which He has told me that He would, by its means, make a new covenant with the world, and He does not wish that we should have any other. But by your learning and your wisdom God will bring you to confusion. For I am persuaded that God will chastise you; whether you will or no, you will be forced to come to repentance, and nothing will remain for you but confusion."

The only point on which Francis gave way was in consenting to ask for a special letter from the Pope recommending his Friars to those among whom they went on Missions. This had become absolutely necessary, as the Brothers were frequently suspected, quite unwarrantably of course, of heresy. The Whitsunday Chapter of 1219 was the last presided over by Francis, and marks the close of the best period of the early life of the Order, when all were united and happy around the founder.

It was immediately after this Chapter that Francis went to the East, and it was during his absence that really serious discontent began to spread in the Order. Many legendary stories have gathered round the visit of Francis to the Crusaders, and to their enemies the Saracens. He is said to have offered, in the presence of the Sultan, to pass

through fire if his priests would do the same. A contemporary notice of Francis in this mission, given in a letter by a Crusader, is simpler and more likely to be strictly true. It is as follows—

" He is so lovable that he is venerated by every one. Having come into our army he has not been afraid in his zeal for the faith to go to that of our enemies. For days together he announced the word of God to the Saracens, but with little success; then the Sultan, King of Egypt, asked him in secret to entreat God to reveal to him by some miracle which is the best religion."[1]

It was after this mission that Francis visited the Holy Land. He obtained special permission from the Sultan to have free access to the Holy Sepulchre. This looks as if the Sultan was really impressed by the saintliness of Francis.

We have no actual record of the details of his visit to the sacred spots where our Lord lived, but we can imagine the rapture with which he gazed upon Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem. Possibly he kept the Christmas of 1219 at the scene of our Saviour's birth. It must indeed have been a blessed time for these poor Friars, who perhaps more nearly than any before or after approached to the imitation of Him Who was born in a stable, and had not where to lay His head.

[1] Jacques de Vitry.

CHAPTER VIII

OPPOSITION TO THE MIND OF FRANCIS

DURING the absence of Francis great strides were made towards altering the idea of the Order in a direction entirely opposed to his spirit. As we have already noticed, Cardinal Ugolino and the Papal Court generally, though admiring Francis most sincerely, were bent on changes. They were continually urging the adoption of a Rule more like the old Monastic Rules. In the case of some of the poor Clares or Clarisses,[1] Cardinal Ugolino succeeded in getting them to adopt the Rule of S. Benedict, though he does not seem to have succeeded in persuading S. Clare herself and her immediate followers to do so. The cardinal was continually in the neighbourhood of Assisi, and appears to have given encouragement to those Friars who were beginning to revolt. Brother Matteo of Narni and Brother Gregoreo of Naples had been left in charge by Francis. They imme-

[1] Sisters of S. Clare. See next chapter.

diately began to work towards an alteration of the Rule in the direction of less poverty and more observances. For example, at the Chapter of Whitsuntide 1220 they added to the number of fasts, but alleviated the strictness as to meat and milk. Though this sounds very small, it meant that the division between the old disciples and the new ones was beginning to show itself. Some of the Friars hastened to the East to tell Francis, and he returned in time for the Michaelmas meeting. He found disturbance imminent. A report had even got about that he was dead, and that the Order was without a head. To this period belongs the story of his going to Bologna, where he had heard of a new house that had been built for the Brothers. So disgusted was he at such an infringement of the Rule, that he ordered all the Brothers to come out of the house, even those who were sick. Cardinal Ugolino, however, publicly declared the house to be his own, and persuaded Francis to modify his command.

He was well received at Bologna, and some of the learned men of the university joined the Order. The cardinal spared no pains in trying to persuade Francis to conform more closely to the requirements of the Papal Court. Francis consented to ask the Pope for an official father or "Pope" to look after the Order, and Ugolino was of course appointed.

"Reform" began in all directions; for example, the postulants were obliged to have a year's

novitiate. This was probably a necessary rule, but it was always difficult for Francis to see the use of such a regulation. As we have said before, he was so simple and pure-minded himself, that he could hardly enter into the thoughts of a Brother who required a very formal training in leading the Gospel Life.

The Bull of Honorius, by which these reforms were allowed, is extremely important, because it really marks the authorized institution of the Order.

" Honorius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to Brother Francis and the other priors or custodes of the Brothers Minor, greeting and apostolic benediction. In nearly all religious Orders it has been wisely ordained that those who present themselves with the purpose of observing the regular life shall make trial of it for a certain time, during which they also shall be tested, in order to leave neither place nor pretext for inconsiderate steps. For these reasons we command you by these presents to admit no one to make profession until after one year of novitiate; we forbid that after profession any Brother shall leave the Order, and that any one shall take back again him who has gone out from it. We also forbid that those wearing your habit shall circulate here and there without obedience, lest the purity of your poverty be corrupted."

Francis felt that a change had come about. He

was too meek and humble to resist for long the pressure of those who urged the alterations upon him. It was the more difficult to do so because, in the case at least of Ugolino and Elias, it came from men to whom he owed much, and who profoundly admired him. It is doubtful too how far they themselves realized how surely they were demolishing his idea. In September 1220 he resigned the office of Superior to Peter of Catana, saying to his Brothers: " Henceforward am I dead unto you, but see here Brother Peter of Catana, unto whom I and all of you will be obedient." Prostrating himself upon the ground he did obedience and reverence unto him.

" He therefore," says Brother Leo, " thenceforward did remain subject even unto death, more humbly bearing him in all things, than ever a one of the others." [1]

Probably it was somewhat later on than this that he was asked by a Friar why he had cast them off, and he replied, " My son, I do love the brethren the best I may, but, and if they would follow my footsteps, verily, then should I love them all the better, nor should I make me strange with them. For some there be among the number of the superiors that do draw them aside to other things, setting before them the example of the elders, and holding my advice as of little account."

Once again when ill he sat upright in his bed

[1] *Spec.*, xxxix.

and cried out, "Who are they that have snatched my Religion and my brethren from my hand? If I come to the General Chapter I will show them of what kind is my will."[1]

In 1221 Brother Elias succeeded Peter de Catana, and in that year Francis, yielding to pressure, produced a Rule, or the materials for a Rule. As a matter of fact Francis himself never actually drew up a Rule in the strict sense. The original Rule of 1210, as we have seen, was the Gospel itself, with a few directions. In that and in the ten folios of beautiful advice to his Brothers, given in 1221, we have the real spirit of Francis. But even in this latter the signs of the change were manifest. The Gospel passage from S. Luke ix. 1-6 was omitted. It was eventually published in 1223 in a shorter form, the abbreviations having been probably made by Cardinal Ugolino. This is called "The Rule of 1223," and was approved by the Pope on November 25 of that year. But Francis himself never changed, and his "Will" within a few years later brings us back to the old idea, and was, as M. Sabatier remarks, practically a revocation of the Rule of 1223. The following are a few extracts from the document of 1221, where Francis speaks for himself, before the abbreviations had been made which resulted in the Rule of 1223.

"By the holy love which is in God, I pray all the Friars, ministers as well as others, to put aside

[1] *Spec.*, xli.

every obstacle, every care, every anxiety, that they may be able to consecrate themselves, entirely to serve, love, and honour the Lord God, with a pure heart and a sincere purpose, which is what He asks above all things.

"Let us then keep in the true way, the life, the truth, and the Holy Gospel of Him Who has deigned for our sake to leave His Father, that He may manifest His name to us, saying, Father, I have manifested Thy name to those whom Thou hast given me, and the words which Thou hast given me I have given also unto them.

"And we supplicate all those who desire to serve the Lord God, in the bosom of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, all priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, and exorcists, readers, porters, all clerks, all monks and nuns, all children and little ones, paupers and exiles, kings, princes, workmen and labourers, servants and masters, the virgins, the continent, and the married, laics, men and women, all children, youths, young men and old men, the sick and the well, the small and the great, the peoples of every tribe and tongue and nation, all men in every part of the world whatsoever, who are or who shall be, we pray and beseech them, all we Brothers Minor, unprofitable servants, that all together, with one accord we persevere in the true faith and in penitence, for outside of these no person can be saved."

We see in this last paragraph how wide and all-embracing was the idea of Francis for his Brothers.

It is an appeal extending far outside the narrow circle of his own community, a call to all Christians by some means or other to follow the Gospel example. The revolution proceeded very fast under Brother Elias, chiefly in the slackening of strict poverty, the regulating of observances, and the admission of "learned brothers." Francis did not object to learning for its own sake, but he felt that the admission of students would destroy the peculiar character of the Order, which as a matter of fact it did. It was contrary to the vocation of the early Friars. They had been called to extend the Kingdom of Christ by their example of simple Gospel living. If anything theirs was a protest against the subtlety and dryness of the theologians, which had alienated the masses from religion. It seemed to Francis to be a retrograde step for his Friars to take to "learning."

"Those brethren of mine," he said, "that are led away by curiosity of knowledge, in the day of tribulation will find their hands empty. Therefore would I that they should rather be corroborated in godliness, so that, when the time of tribulation shall come, they may have the Lord with them in their straits, for verily tribulation shall come, such as that books useful for naught shall be cast aside into lockers and dark corners." This he said not because the reading of Holy Scripture was displeasing to him, but that he might withdraw all from over-much care for learning. For he would rather that they should be good brethren

in charity than smatterers in the curiosities of knowledge.[1]

And he said further: "Many brethren there may be that set all their study and all their care upon acquiring knowledge, letting go their holy calling by wandering forth both in mind and body beyond the way of humility and holy prayer, who when they have preached to the people and have learnt that some have been thereby edified or converted to repentance, are incontinent, puffed up and extol themselves upon their work and the gain of another, as if it had been their own gain; when nevertheless they have preached rather to their own condemnation and harm, and have done nothing for themselves according to the truth, save only as the instruments of them through whom in truth the Lord hath gathered in this harvest, for them that they believe to be edified and converted to repentance by their knowledge and preaching, the Lord doth in truth edify and convert by the prayers of the holy, poor, humble and simple brethren, albeit the holy brethren for the most part know not aught thereof, for thus it is the will of God they should know not lest haply they might pride themselves thereon.

"Those brethren be my Knights of the Round Table, that do hide them in wildernesses and lonely places that they may give themselves up to prayer and meditation, bewailing their own and others'

[1] *Spec.*, lxix.

sins, living simply and humbly conversing, whose holiness is known unto God, albeit that at times it is unknown to the brethren and to men."

Yet in spite of all his protests "learned" Friars rapidly multiplied. They were to be found at Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and all the great centres, vying with the Dominicans in attracting men of culture to the Order.

Besides the introduction of learning there were many other signs of change. The Friars began to reside in conventual houses; churches were built for them: they were no longer merely itinerant preachers, but were supplanting the parish clergy on all sides. This became a fruitful source of trouble in after years. Yet it came about under the direct encouragement of Rome, the Pope granting privileges to Franciscan churches as early as in March 1222. Nor was even poverty itself faithfully observed. The Friars were no longer servants but guests in houses where they stayed; they were "above all, instead of submitting to all."

It may be easily imagined what a source of sorrow all this was to Francis and the faithful few. We can trace the anguish of his soul in many of the sentences preserved for us by his companion Brother Leo. "After that I perceived," he said, "how the Lord did multiply the number of the brethren, and how they by reason of their lukewarmness and want of spirit did begin to decline from the right way and safe, wherein they had been wont to walk, and treading the broader way that

leadeth unto death, would no longer pay heed unto their calling and profession nor to any good ensample, and were not minded to forsake the perilous and deadly journey they had emprised by reason of any preaching or admonition or ensample of mine that I did manifest before them, I did therefore resign the Superiorship." The last five years of his life, according to M. Sabatier, were years of "incessant protest." "Almost everything that was done in the Order after 1221 was done either without Francis' knowledge, or against his will." [1]

It is not surprising that we find him withdrawing more and more from the haunts of men into the hermitages around Assisi, accompanied by the little circle of his dearest Brothers; "the simple, humble, poor and despised, vile and abject," as he called them, "who with holy prayers and godly words do edify others continually."

[1] *Sabat.*, p. 275.

CHAPTER IX

THE CLARISSES AND THE 'THIRD ORDER'

THIS is a convenient point at which to narrate the story of Clare, and also to make some reference to the "Third Order" (so called).

It was morally certain that Francis, with his wonderful enthusiasm and pure ideal, would attract Christian women to follow him. His first and most loyal follower, the one who drank perhaps more deeply of the Franciscan spirit even than the holiest of the Friars, was Clare.

Clare was a girl of noble family in Assisi, and was born twelve years after Francis. As a child she could not fail to have heard of and seen the young man of fashion of whom all the little town was talking. She was probably present at some of those scenes in the early life of Francis which we have described. At any rate at the age of sixteen she heard him preach in the cathedral, and was smitten at once with the most intense admiration for him and for his ideal of poverty. She immediately made up her mind to give up her life

to religion, and she offered herself to Francis for self-dedication. The fact that he accepted her at once, and without any novitiate gave her the veil, although he himself was not in priest's orders, shows how unmethodical the arrangements of the early Friars were. It was at the Portiuncula that the ceremony took place.

> "First to be shorn as vowed to Christ her Lord,
> Clare did here forsake the world to find Him.
> Mother of noble brethren and of sisters,
> Bringing back Christ to men through their endeavour."
>
> *Spec.*, lxxxiv.

It was on Palm Sunday night, 1212, that she thus left her home and went to the Portiuncula. Francis read her the Gospel as he was accustomed to do to any one desiring to join him, and he then received her. For a time she was taken care of by some Benedictine nuns. Her father, Favorino, in somewhat the same style as Bernardone, pursued her. His rage was doubled when her younger sister Agnes also ran away and joined Clare. He could not, however, regain them, and gave up the attempt.

After a time Francis hit upon the happy idea of handing over the chapel and hermitage of S. Damian to Clare and the sisters who were now rapidly gathering round her. S. Damians was one of the places which Francis had himself repaired; it was also the sacred spot where his crucified Lord had spoken to him and given him his call. There the Clarisses settled down. Their life

was the same as that of the Friars, save only that they could not go out on missionary work. Their Rule was the Gospel. At first their connection with Francis was very intimate, but as they increased in number they became more enclosed. They helped on the work of the Brothers in every way they could, tending some of the sick for them, and spinning the altar-linen for the churches which they cleansed. Clare exercised a most important function in encouraging Francis when he was depressed in spirit, and in persuading him to continue his missionary work when he was sometimes inclined to become wholly contemplative. She was heart and soul with Francis on the question of poverty. Many a time she had to contend very firmly against those in authority who tried to persuade her to change the Rule. When the other convents of her Order adopted a modified Rule, more like the old Benedictine Rule, she and her sisters at S. Damians held out for the old observance, and finally were victorious, for just before her death her Rule was confirmed by the Pope.

As in the case of Francis, so in her case, Cardinal Ugolino was the chief agent of the Roman Court in trying to persuade her to make changes. Just as he admired and reverenced Francis, so he admired and reverenced Clare. Yet he was bent on destroying their ideals. After Francis' death (when he was Pope Gregory IX.) he tried to prevent the Friars from visiting Clare at S. Damians, but she was so firm in her objection that he had

to give way, and the special friends of Francis—Brother Leo and Brother Giles, and such like—continued to go to S. Damians and converse with her till the time of her death.

The Pope once most unsuccessfully offered to dispense her from her vows if she would fall in with his views as to a relaxation of the Rule. "If it is your vows," he said, "which prevent you, we will release you." To which she replied, "Holy Father, absolve me from my sins, but I have no desire for a dispensation from following Christ."

It seems clear that the Rule of these primitive Clarisses was, as in the case of the early Friars, simply the Gospel Life. This brings us to speak of the "Third Order," so called. It is very doubtful if Francis intended to found a separate Order of persons living in the world. The "Third Order" is said to have been "founded" in 1221, but it is more correct to say that in the intention of Francis there was but one "Order" for Friars, Clarisses, and Brothers and Sisters of Penitence alike. He called upon all to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and loyalty. The Friars did it in one way, by preaching and by renouncing all worldly occupation, the Sisters did it in another way, the "Third Order" did it in another way. These "Brothers and Sisters of Penitence" were very much more than a mere guild of lay associates, as they became afterwards. In 1221 they began to be recognized by the authorities, but they had

practically been in existence from the commencement of the Friars' movement. They aimed at the same ideal as the Brothers Minor. There is no Rule extant as having been given them specially by Francis. The official Rule of 1289 was almost certainly not from the pen of Francis, but merely an attempt on the part of the Pope to regulate the various lay-associations then in existence, and to get them to work in closer co-operation. The "Brothers and Sisters of Penitence," being the most important of these lay-associations, were naturally selected as the best basis for unification. But in the early days their Rule was only the Gospel. Francis called upon them to work for peace; and it is remarkable that at least for a few years actual disarmament did take place. He also bid them regulate their almsgiving, and as far as possible practise poverty. B. Lucchesio, for example, who has been called the first Brother of the "Third Order," was a rich corn merchant, but he gave away all he possessed except a little house, a garden, and a donkey. He used to look after the sick, carrying them on his shoulders, nursing them in his house, and begging for them. From this it will be seen that there was very little difference between a "Brother of Penitence" and a "Brother Minor" in these first days.

Nothing could be more different than the spirit of this story of B. Lucchesio and the modern Rule of the Third Order of Francis, which is largely

made up of attractive privileges and offers of easily obtained indulgences.

M. Sabatier bids us read Francis' "Letter to all Christians" if we want the substance of his teaching to men and women "in the world."

"To all Christians, monks, clerics, or laymen, whether men or women, to all who dwell in the whole world, Brother Francis, their most submissive servitor, presents his duty and wishes the true peace of heaven, and sincere love in the Lord."

Thus it begins. It is an appeal to all to live in peace and joy and love. The governors are to exercise mercy. All are to be humble, simple, pure, submissive. The description of the death of the wicked, bereft of money, title, learning, cursed by his friends, is very terrible. The whole concludes—

"I, Brother Francis, your little servitor, I beg and conjure you by the love that is in God, ready to kiss your feet, to receive with humility and love these and all other words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to conform your conduct to them. And let those who devoutly receive them and understand them pass them on to others. And if they thus persevere unto the end may they be blessed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

A remarkable testimony to the impression produced by the life of the Friars and Clarisses is to be found in a letter of Jacques de Vitry,[1] a French-

[1] See Appendix.

man who happened to be at Perugia in the year 1216, at the very time of the death of Innocent III., and the election of Honorius III. It is a very valuable piece of contemporary evidence, and will make a suitable conclusion to the present chapter. He writes—

"During my stay at the Pontifical Court, I saw many things which deeply grieved me there. People are so much occupied with secular and temporal affairs, with all that concerns kings and kingdoms, with litigation and law-suits, that it is almost impossible to speak of religious matters.

"I found, however, in these countries one ground for consolation: that is, that many rich people of both sexes, living in society, forsake all for the love of Christ, and renounce the world. They are called the Brothers Minor. The Pope and the cardinals hold them in great respect. As for themselves, they are completely detached from temporal things, and daily make most strenuous efforts to snatch from the vanities of this world souls that are perishing, and to draw them into their ranks. Thanks be to God, their labour has already borne much fruit, and they have won many souls; so effectually that he who hears them calls more, and one audience draws another.

"They live after the manner of the primitive Church, of whom it is written, 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.' During the day they go into the towns and villages to win souls and to work. At night they

resort to hermitages or lonely places, to give themselves up to contemplation.

"The women live together near cities, in various convents, accept nothing, but are maintained by the work of their hands. They are greatly disturbed and grieved at seeing themselves honoured more than they desire, whether by clergy or laity.

"The men of this Order meet, not without great benefit, once a year, in a place appointed beforehand, to rejoice in God and to eat together. Then, with the advice of virtuous men, they adopt and promulgate holy Rules approved by the Pope. After that, they disperse for the rest of the year into Lombardy, Tuscany, and even into Apulia and Sicily. Brother Nicholas, who is a fellow-countryman of the Pope, a holy and religious man, has recently quitted the Court to go and join them, but as he is indispensable to the Pope, he has been recalled.

"I believe it is to shame the prelates, who are like dogs unable to bark, that God wills, before the end of the world, to save many souls by these poor simple ones."[1]

[1] Quoted in *Un Nouveau Chapitre*, pp. 12, 13.

CHAPTER X

THE STIGMATA

It is a pleasure to turn from the sad story of dissensions to tell of Francis, as he continued to be through all his troubles, the patient, devout lover of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of all the festivals of our Lord, there was none for which he had a greater reverence than Christmas. "After that the Lord was born for us," he used to say, "it did become a matter of necessity that we should be saved." For this cause he paid great attention to its proper observance. He liked to feel that all creation, birds and beasts as well as men, could join in the joy of Christmas. He said he would wish all mayors of cities and lords of castles and towns to be bound on Christmas Day to have corn scattered on the roads for "our sisters the larks," and other birds also, "and that for reverence of the Son of God, Whom on such a night the most Blessed Virgin Mary did lay down in the stable betwixt the ox and the ass, whosoever hath an ox and an ass be bound on that night to provide

them provender the best that may be, and in like manner also that on such a day all poor folk should be given their fill of good victuals by the rich." [1]

It was in December 1223, just after the final approbation of the new Rule, that Francis expressed a great wish to a friend, John of Greccio, that he might observe the coming Christmas with great solemnity. Accordingly on the eve of the Nativity all the country people gathered together at Greccio with the monks and friars, carrying torches and singing carols. The good knight John got ready a stable with manger, oxen, and asses and a little crib. There they placed a little baby-image to represent the Holy Child, before which Francis knelt and meditated in an ecstasy of love. Then at the midnight mass he officiated as deacon, reading the Holy Gospel and preaching with a fervour that melted the hearts of all present to tears.

This has been looked upon as the beginning of that innocent and most moving custom, now so common in the Christian churches of Europe, of placing what is called a "crèche" or "crib" in the church at Christmastide, as a centre of meditation for the people.

We must now describe the greatest of all the spiritual events of the life of Francis, that which most of all seems to raise him to the level of the greatest saints, the mysterious reception of the

[1] *Spec.*, cxiv.

Stigmata, or Marks of the Lord's Passion, on his body. We have purposely omitted reference to the countless stories of miracles which have been associated with the life of Francis, because in so many cases they are obviously embellished and exaggerated, if not quite untrue. But the case of the Stigmata is different. The story has been subjected to severe criticism, and seems to have stood the test—nor is there anything improbable in its main features.[1]

The scene of the event is the "Verna," a mountain peak among the Apennines. Monte Averno or Monte della Vernia, or, more simply still, La Verna, is a rugged mass of Apennine rising some four thousand feet "between the sources of the Tiber and Arno," as Dante tells us, not far from Arezzo on the borders of Tuscany, whose upper slopes are for ever memorable as a hallowed spot, "very devout and very suitable for prayer and contemplation."

Clothed with beautiful woods of oak and pine, fragrant in spring-time with violets, bright with blue and pink hepaticas, with crimson single tulips and mauve anemones, broken up into solitary ravines, with great piles of rock protruding here and there, the place charms us now with its glorious view of two seas from the summit, with the quaint and aged monastery clinging to its side, no less than when ages ago it charmed Francis by its solitude and stillness, a place where he could commune with

[1] See Appendix to Sabatier's *Life* on the 'Critical Study of the Stigmata.'

God, undisturbed by any save the beasts and birds, his "little brothers and sisters."

It was there that one of the numerous hermitages was situated, which had been given to the Friars by their friends as centres for retreat and meditation. The Verna, as we have already related, was the gift of Orlando, Count of Chiusi, in 1213. In the August of 1224 Francis started to go there, accompanied by his faithful children, Brother Masseo, Brother Angelo, and Brother Leo, in order to keep the Lent or forty days' fast of S. Michael the Archangel, that is, before the feast of Michaelmas. Francis appointed Brother Masseo as leader of the little band, saying to him: "Thou shalt be our guardian and superior in this journey, to wit, so long as we be going and staying together, and we will observe our Rule, to wit, that we be either saying the Office, or speaking of God, or keeping silence, and that we take no thought beforehand, either of eating, or drinking, or sleeping; but when it is time to seek a lodging, we will beg a little bread, and stay and rest in the place that God may make ready for us."

Wonderful and some very beautiful stories are told of their pilgrimage to the Verna and of their stay there. As they rested under a tree, immediately the little birds gathered round them and "with singing and flapping of wings showed joy and gladness exceeding great, and came about S. Francis in such fashion that some settled on his head, some on his shoulders, and some on his arms,

some in his lap, and some round his feet." "I believe, Brother most dear," he said, "that it is pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ that we should dwell in this lonely mountain, seeing that our little sisters and brothers the birds show such joy at our coming."[1]

Hearing that the Friars had arrived at the Verna, the owner, Orlando, came to visit them and brought them food. He also built huts for them, Francis' hut being a little removed from the rest.

On August 15 he began his lent or fast in honour of the holy angels. During this time he suffered very terrible temptation of the devil. Speaking to his companion, he said, "Did the brethren know how many and sore be the temptations and afflictions wherewith the devils do persecute me, there is not one of them but would be moved with pity and compassion towards me."[2] Of this mysterious period of solitary communion with God we can know very little. He was suffering great mental anguish at the time, at the thought of the turn things had taken in the history of the Order. He was withdrawing himself more and more from the world, and finding his joy in Jesus. He was contemplating especially the Passion of our Lord, and striving to enter into the mind of the Man of Sorrows. Again and again when he opened the book of the Gospels to read, it is said that he opened it at the story of Gethsemane and Calvary.

[1] *Fioretti*, *Reflections*, i. [2] *Spec.*, xcix.

Then in the early morning of September 14, Holy Cross Day, after he had spent the night in prayer, a most sublime event occurred which, allowing for certain legendary embellishments, is best read in the simple language of the *Fioretti*, thus—

"He began with exceeding great devotion to contemplate the passion of Christ and His infinite love; and the fervour of devotion so grew in him that he was altogether transformed into Jesu through love and pity. And as he was otherwise set on fire in this contemplation, on that same morn he saw descend from heaven a seraph with six wings resplendent and aflame, and as with swift flight the seraph drew nigh unto S. Francis, so that he could discern him, he clearly saw that he bore in him the image of a man crucified; and his wings were in such guise displayed, that two wings were spread over his head, two were spread out to fly, and the other twain covered all his body. . . .

"In the said seraphic apparition, Christ, the which appeared to him, spake to S. Francis certain high and secret things, the which S. Francis in his life-time desired not to reveal to any man; but after his life was done he did reveal them as is set forth below; and the words were these: 'Knowest thou,' said Christ, 'what it is that I have done unto thee? I have given thee the Stigmata, that are the signs of my passion, to the end that thou mayest be my standard-bearer.'

"Then this marvellous vision vanishing away after

long space and secret converse, left in the heart of S. Francis an exceeding ardour and flame of love divine; and in his flesh a marvellous image and copy of the passion of Christ. For straightway in the hands and feet of S. Francis began to appear the marks of the nails, in such wise as he had seen them in the body of Jesus Christ, the Crucified, the which had shown Himself to him in the likeness of a seraph; and thus his hands and feet appeared to be pierced through the middle with nails, and the heads of them were in the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet outside the flesh, and their points came out on the back of his hands and of his feet, so that they seemed bent back and riveted in such fashion that under the bend and riveting, which all stood out above the flesh, might easily be put a finger of the hand, as in a ring; and the heads of the nails were round and black. Likewise in the right side appeared an image of a wound made by a lance, unhealed and red and bleeding, the which afterwards oft-times dropped blood from the sacred breast of S. Francis, and stained with blood his tunic and hose."[1]

[1] *Fioretti*, *Reflections*, iii.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST YEARS

On September 30, 1224, Francis returned to the Portiuncula. He bid an affectionate farewell to the mountain in these words: "Farewell, Monte Verna; may God bless thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; abide in peace; we shall never see one another more." His return journey was a kind of triumph; crowds came out to meet him at every village and town; and he is said to have worked many miracles as he went along. After a short stay at the Portiuncula, he started off on another mission; but it was not long before a terrible affliction, a disease of the eyes, began to wax so painful that he was obliged to desist.

Cardinal Ugolino, who was with the Pope at Rieti, was much concerned about Francis' illness, and sent for him that he might consult the Pope's doctor. "Brother," he said, "thou dost not well in that thou dost not make thee be healed, for thy life and health be of exceeding great usefulness to the brethren and lay-folk, and to the whole Church.

For seeing thou hast compassion on thy sick brethren, and hast ever been pitiful and merciful toward them, thou oughtest not to be cruel to thyself in so sore necessity. Wherefore I do enjoin thee that thou make thee to be healed and succoured."

It was difficult to persuade Francis to go, but he at last made up his mind to do so. He, however, spent some weeks at S. Damians on his way, during which his illness grew worse, and for a long time he could see neither the light of day nor of fire. Saint Clare received him with joy, making a large cell of reeds for him in the garden. Here, as Brother Leo quaintly puts it, "it came to pass by divine permission that for increase of his affliction and his merit so many mice did come into his cell as that running over him and about him by night and day they allowed him neither to pray nor to rest."[1] Accepting this trial most patiently, he prayed fervently to our Lord, Who revealed to him that through these great tribulations he should indeed enter into His Kingdom. Then sitting down to meditate a while Francis suddenly broke forth into a most joyful song, the famous "Canticle of the Sun," thus—

"Most High, Almighty, and most gracious Lord,
Thine be the praises and the glory and the honour and
Every blessing, for unto Thee alone, O most Highest, do
They belong, and no man is worthy to make mention
Of Thy Name.

[1] *Spec.*, c.

Praised be Thou, O Lord, of all Thy creatures, and
Above all of Brother Sun, my Lord, that doth
Illumine us with the dawning of the day.
For fair is he and bright, and the brightness of his
Glory doth signify Thee, O Thou most Highest.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Moon and
The Stars that Thou hast shapen in the heavens,
Bright and precious and comely.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Brother Wind
And the air, and of the clouds and the clear,
And of all the times of the sky whereby Thou
Dost make provision for Thy creatures.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Water, for
Manifold is her use, and humble is she and
Precious and chaste.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Brother Fire, by
Whom Thou dost lighten our darkness, and
Comely is he and joyful and masterful
And strong.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Earth our mother,
That doth cherish us and hath us in keeping, and doth
Bring forth fruit in abundance and flowers of many
Colours and the grass.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of them that do show
Forgiveness unto others for love of Thee, and do endure
Sickness and tribulation. Yea, blessed be they that
Do endure in peace, for of Thee, O Thou most Highest,
Shall they be crowned.

Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of Sister Death, the
Death of the body from whom no man living may
Escape, but woe unto them that shall die
In deadly sin, and blessed be they that shall
Walk according unto Thy most Holy Will, for
Unto them shall the second death do no hurt.[1]

Praise ye and bless my Lord and give thanks
Unto Him and serve Him in all humbleness.[2]

[1] This stanza, and some of the others, he added later.
[2] *Spec.*, cxx.

Francis was in an ecstasy of joy as he sang this song. He immediately made a tune for it, and taught his companions how to sing it. Then he conceived the idea of sending them out into the world to preach and sing the new canticle. They were to sing it after every sermon; and gathering a crowd round them, like jugglers at a fair, they were to say: "We are God's jugglers, and this is the pay we beg of you, that you shall be in a state of true repentance." "For," said Francis, "what be the servants of God but His jugglers, that so lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual joy."

From S. Damians Francis went on to Rieti in September 1225. At the request of the cardinal he took up his residence at the Bishop's palace, though he afterwards removed to the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo, not far off. Here he was subjected to the horrible operation of cauterization, which in those days was considered the right thing for any ailment of the eyes. The bravery and patience of Francis under this torture was extraordinary.

"When the iron was set in the fire for making of the cautery, the blessed Francis being fain to comfort his spirit lest he should be overmuch afeard, spake thus unto the fire: 'Fire, my brother, noble and useful amongst other creatures, be thou gracious unto me in this hour, seeing that of old have I loved thee, and yet will love thee for the love of Him that did create thee. Earnestly, moreover, do I pray the Creator that did create both thee and me, that He will so temper thy heat as that I may be able to abide it.' And when he had ended his prayer, he did sign the fire with the sign of the Cross. 'But we that were with him,' says Brother Leo, 'at that time did all flee away for pity and compassion toward him, and only the leech did remain with him. But when the cautery was made we returned unto him, who said: 'O feeble-hearted and of little faith, wherefore did ye flee? In truth I say unto you that I felt neither pain nor any heat of the fire. Yea, and it be not now well seared, let him again sear it better!' "[1]

It is needless to say that this operation, which consisted in cutting "the veins from the ear as far as the eyebrow," and "piercing both of his ears with a hot iron," had no effect whatever in curing him.

Another sweet story is related of him when at Rieti. The doctor told him of a certain poor woman who was suffering from a similar complaint to his own, but had no money to pay for medical treatment. Then he called his brother-guardian and said, "We must return our loan." "What loan?" asked the Brother in surprise. "The cloak," said Francis, "which we borrowed from that poor sick woman." Then he sent to the poor woman a cloak and twelve loaves of bread with this message: "The poor man unto whom thou didst lend this cloak

[1] *Spec.*, cxv.

sendeth thanks unto thee for the loan thereof. Take that which is thine own." The poor woman did not at first understand this "spiritual joke" which was being played upon her. "Let me go in peace," she said to the messenger, "I know naught of that thou sayest." Whereupon he set the cloak and twelve loaves in her hands and went away. Then perceiving that he was in earnest, "with fear and reverence, she received the same, rejoicing and praising the Lord." And fearing lest it should be taken away from her she arose stealthily by night and went back to her own house with joy. But Francis had arranged with the brother-guardian that all her expenses should be paid as long as she was there.[1]

After a time it was decided that he should return once again to Assisi, but the journey was purposely made by a roundabout away in order to avoid Perugia. This was owing to the fact—a fact disgusting to our modern notions—that the people were now on the look-out for the relics of the saint. Already they had begun quarrelling for the possession of his hair, and even the parings of his nails. Now there seemed to be a likelihood that the body itself would soon be a lucrative object of devotion. It was therefore dangerous to risk his dying at Perugia. Soldiers were sent from Assisi to escort him in safety to his native town.

On his arrival there he was received by the

[1] *Spec.*, xxxiii.

Bishop into his own house, where he lived for some two months, from July to September. His four special companions at this time were Brothers Leo, Angelo, Rufino, and Masseo. Brother Elias, the Minister-General, was also, of course, close by.

These last days were rendered doubly sad by the dissensions now prevalent in the Order, and by the attempts that the party of Brother Elias made to suppress or to deprive of their obvious meaning all the messages that Francis in his simplicity kept on giving as his last directions to the Friars. It is in these last messages that we get at the true mind of the saint, which had been the same all along. Poverty, love, peace, joy in suffering, spontaneous obedience from love and not from compulsion, utter devotion to our Lord and His Gospel—these are the burden of the injunctions of the dying Francis, as they had been of the living, active saint. He was often very much oppressed by the thought of what would happen after his death. To a Brother who asked him who should be his successor, he replied indirectly by a beautiful description of what a Superior or Minister-General ought to be.

"This man," he said, "ought to be one of most grave life, of great discretion, of laudable report, without private affections, lest while he loveth a part more dearly, he breed scandal to the whole. The study of prayer ought he to hold dear, but so as that he distribute certain hours to his own soul and certain others to his own flock, for the first

thing in the morning ought he to set before all things the most holy sacrifice of the mass, and therein by long devotion most lovingly to commend himself and the flock to the divine protection. But after prayer let him set him in the midst to be plucked and filled by all, ready to make answer to all and to make provision for all with charity and patience and gentleness. . . . Let him be a blasphemer of money, the which is the chiefest source of corruption to our profession and perfection, and as the head and pattern to be imitated by all, let him in no wise give rise unto abuse by multiplying of money-boxes. Let it be enough for him as for himself to have his habit and his little book; for others his little basket with a reed, his tablets, and a seal. Let him not be a heaper-up of books nor overmuch given to reading, lest haply he deviate from his office that cometh before his study. . . . Unto the renegades of the Order, as unto sheep that have perished, let him deny not a heart of compassion, nor ever refuse them mercy, knowing that so overpowering be the temptations that can drive them to so great a downfall, that were the Lord to permit him to be tried thereby himself, haply he might slide down toward an even steeper precipice. . . . In case at any time he should be in need of more palatable and better food, let him take it not by stealth, but in the public place, so that others may have no shame in providing them with the like in their ailments and infirmities. . . . Let him

not lend ear to babblers; in accusations specially, let him hold them suspect and believe them not easily. . . . Let him always think and feel that his office of Superior is more of a burden than an honour to him. . . . Behold, I say, such an one ought the Minister-General to be."[1]

Francis had no belief in despotic government. Though it grieved him sorely that any of his Brothers should have fallen away from their first purity, he would not try to recall them except by persuasion and example: "Seeing," he said, "that I cannot correct and mend them by preaching, admonition, and example, I am not minded to become an executioner to punish and scourge them like the magistrates of this world."[2]

"The brethren have their Rule and have sworn to observe it, and that they may have no excuse on my account, after that it pleased the Lord to appoint me to be Superior over them, I did swear before them that I myself in like manner would observe the same. Whence, since that the brethren know what they ought to do, and moreover what to avoid, naught remaineth save that I should teach them by works, seeing that for this was I given unto them in my life and after my death."[3]

Beautiful too is the letter addressed to the whole Order from his death-bed, chiefly on the subject of the Blessed Sacrament. Here are some passages—

[1] *Spec.*, lxxx. [2] *Spec.*, lxxi. [3] *Spec.*, lxxxi.

"To all the simple and obedient Brothers, the oldest and the most recent, Brother Francis, a mean and perishing man, your little servant, gives greeting. . . . Persevere in discipline and obedience, and with an honest and firm will keep that which you have promised. . . . God offers Himself to us as to His children. This is why I beg of you, all of you, my Brothers, kissing your feet, and with all the love of which I am capable, to have all possible respect for the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . How holy" (this to the priest-brothers), "pure and worthy should be the priest who touches with his hands, who receives into his mouth and into his heart, and who distributes to others the living, glorified Jesus, the sight of Whom makes angels rejoice! Oh! what great wretchedness and what a frightful infirmity to have Him there present before you, and to think of other things. . . . Keep nothing for yourselves that He may receive you without reserve, Who has given Himself to you without reserve. . . . God Almighty, eternal, righteous, and merciful, give to us poor wretches to do for Thy sake all that we know of Thy will, and to will always what pleases Thee; so that inwardly purified, enlightened, and kindled by the fire of the Holy Ghost, we may follow in the footprints of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ."[1]

Nor did he forget his poor sisters of S. Clare.

[1] Quoted in *Sabat.*, pp. 323–4.

After he had composed his Canticle of the Sun, he sent them a hymn together with music which he had himself composed. He exhorted them "to live and converse humbly, and be of one mind in charity." "But knowing that from the beginning of their conversion they had led a life passing straight and poverty-stricken, he was moved with compassion toward them," and admonished them that "out of such alms as the Lord might give them, they should discreetly make provision for their bodies with cheerfulness and thanksgiving."

And when Clare herself was much grieved about his illness, and would not be comforted, he sent her a message: "Go and tell Sister Clare to lay aside all sorrow and sadness for that she cannot see me just now, forasmuch as in truth let her know before her departure when she herself and my sisters shall see me and shall be comforted as concerning me."[1]

Up to the last he concerned himself about the affairs of his native town. He was specially concerned on hearing of a great dissension that had arisen between the Bishop and the "High Bailiff" of Assisi. The Bishop had excommunicated his opponent, and the High Bailiff had retaliated by proclaiming a "boycott" on the Bishop. The way in which Francis brought about a reconciliation is truly characteristic. He first composed an additional verse to the Canticle of the Sun, thus—

[1] *Spec.*, xc., cviii.

"Praised be Thou, O my Lord, of them that do show forgiveness for love of Thee,
And do endure sickness and tribulation.
Yea, blessed be they that shall endure in peace,
For of Thee, O Thou most Highest, shall they be crowned."

Then he sent for the High Bailiff to come with his city magnates to the Bishop's house. When they were all assembled in front of the palace two Friars at the command of Francis rose up and sang the canticle. The High Bailiff listened with great devotion and many tears, "as unto the Gospel of the Lord," and at the conclusion thus spoke—

"In truth I say unto you that not only my Lord Bishop, whom I do desire and ought to have for my lord, but were it one that had slain mine own brother or my son, him would I forgive!" And so saying, he flung himself down at the Bishop's feet, and said unto him: "Behold, I am ready in all things to make satisfaction unto thee as thou shalt please, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His servant blessed Francis!"

"But the Bishop accepting him, did lift him up with his hands, and said unto him: 'According unto mine office meet it is that I be humble, and for that by nature I be swift to wrath, meet is it also that thou shouldst pardon me.' And on this wise with great kindness and love did they embrace and kiss the one the other."[1]

The sick-room of Francis was thus a centre from which peace and joy radiated out to all around.

[1] *Spec.*, ci.

He was continually giving instructions on all kinds of matters and evidences of his affection. Naturally anxious that the Portiuncula should remain for ever the head-quarters of the Order, he was wont to say, "See, O my sons, that never do ye forsake this place. If that ye be thrust forth on the one side, enter ye by the other, for this place is holy."

Once when a certain dainty dish was brought to him, he bethought him of Brother Bernard, the first of those who joined the Order, and said, "This dish is good for Brother Bernard." When Bernard came he asked Francis for his blessing. And Francis laying his hands on him (though he could not see him), said to the bystanders, "The first Brother that the Lord did give unto me was Brother Bernard, that did first begin and did most perfectly fulfil the perfection of the Holy Gospel by giving all his goods to the poor, by reason of which I am bound to love him better than any Brother in the whole Order. Whence I will and enjoin as far as I am able, that whosoever shall be Minister-General shall love and honour him as myself."[1]

The short farewell and benediction which Francis pronounced one night when his end was thought to be near is most touching—

"Adieu, my children, remain all of you in the fear of God, abide always united to Christ; great trials are in store for you, and tribulation draws

[1] *Spec.*, cvii.

nigh. Happy are they who persevere as they have begun; for there will be scandals and divisions among you. As for me, I am going to the Lord my God. Yes, I have the assurance that I am going to Him Whom I have served."[1]

But the end did not come then. Another day he was visited by a doctor of Arezzo named John Good. He would not call him by his name, because our Lord had said, "None is *good* save God only;" so neither would he call any one "father" or "master," because our Lord had forbidden it. He asked the doctor how long he had to live. On being told that he would die "at the end of September or on the fourth of the Nones of October," he lay back in bed with great devoutness and reverence, spread out his hands towards the Lord, and with much cheerfulness of mind and body said: "Welcome, my Sister Death. Forasmuch as that, an it please the Lord, I am so soon to die, call Brother Angelo and Brother Leo unto me that they may sing to me of Sister Death."

When the two Brothers had come into his presence, full of grief and sadness, with many tears they chanted the "Song of Brother Sun and of the other creatures of the Lord" that the holy man had made. And at that time he added certain verses concerning Sister Death.[2]

Both by day and night he caused this canticle to be sung around his bed, so much so that Brother

[1] Quoted in *Sabat.*, p. 330.
[2] *Spec.* ciii.; see p. 129 above.

Elias on one occasion remonstrated with him, telling him that the neighbours would be scandalized and would say: "How cometh this man to manifest such cheerfulness when he is nigh to death? He ought rather to be thinking about his death."

This remark of Brother Elias' shows a great want of humour, and a complete failure to enter into the mind of Francis, so happy and joyous, as he "went to meet death singing."[1]

"With great fervency of spirit" Francis replied, "Give me leave, Brother, to rejoice in the Lord and in His praises and in mine own infirmities, seeing that by the grace of the Holy Ghost I am so joined and made one with the Lord, that by His mercy, well may I be glad in Him, most Highest."[2]

When it became clear that Francis had only a few more days to live, he requested that he might be carried to the Portiuncula to die there, "where he had first begun to experience the light and life of the soul." Few scenes in this story are more exquisitely pathetic than that of this solemn procession of the litter, bearing the blind saint across the plain from the Bishop's house to the little chapel of S. Mary. When half the journey had been accomplished, he bid the bearers stop and turn the bed round that his face might be set towards the dear city he loved so well.

"And lifting him up a little in the bed he gave

[1] Thomas of Celano. [2] *Spec.*, cxxi.

his blessing unto the said city, saying: "Lord, whereas this city of old was, as I believe, the place and habitation of wicked men, so now do I see that by reason of Thine abundant mercy in Thine own good time Thou hast shown forth the multitudes of Thy mercies therein above all other cities, and by reason of the goodness thereof alone hast chosen her unto Thyself to be the place and habitation of them that in Truth should acknowledge Thee and give Glory to Thy Holy Name, and make manifest unto all Christian people the sweet smell of good report, holy life, and Gospel perfection. Wherefore I beseech Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies, that Thou remember not our ingratitude, but ever bear in mind the abundant pity that Thou hast shown forth in her, that she may be for ever the place and habitation of them that do truly acknowledge Thee and glorify Thy blessed and most glorious Name from everlasting unto everlasting. Amen!"[1]

Arrived at the Portiuncula, Francis rallied somewhat before the end. He dictated his Will, which may be taken as the final word of the saint, giving the truest expression of his mind and wishes for his Order. Awful quarrels arose over it after his death leading even to murder; changes were made in it, some of it was deliberately suppressed, the plainest words of it were defiantly disregarded; but there it remains, an incontestable witness to the

[1] *Spec.*, cxxiv.

real Franciscan spirit. It has been said that to know exactly what the ideal of Francis was we must read the Rules (so called) of 1210 and of 1221, and the Will. The following is a literal translation of the Will:[1]—

"WILL OF FRANCIS.

"SEE in what manner God gave it to me, to me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penitence: when I lived in sin, it was very painful to me to see lepers, but God Himself led me into their midst, and I remained there a little while. When I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter had become sweet and easy.

"A little while after I quitted the world and God gave me such a faith in His churches that I would kneel down with simplicity and I would say: 'We adore Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all Thy churches which are in the world, and we bless Thee that by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast ransomed the world.'

"Besides, the Lord gave me and still gives me so great a faith in priests who live according to the form of the Holy Roman Church, because of their sacerdotal character, that even if they persecuted me I would have recourse to them. And even though I had all the wisdom of Solomon, if I should find poor secular priests, I would not preach in their parishes without their consent. I desire to respect

[1] Reprinted from Sabatier's *Life*, p. 337, by permission.

them like all the others, to love them and honour them as my lords. I will not consider their sins, for in them I see the Son of God, and they are my lords. I do this because here below I see nothing, I perceive nothing corporally of the most high Son of God, if not His most Holy Body and Blood, which they receive and which they alone distribute to others. I desire above all things to honour and venerate all these most holy Mysteries and to keep them precious. Whenever I find the sacred Names of Jesus or His words in indecent places, I desire to take them away and put them in some decent place. We ought to honour and revere all the theologians and those who preach the most holy word of God, as dispensing to us spirit and life.

"When the Lord gave me some Brothers no one showed me what I ought to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I ought to live according to the model of the holy gospel. I caused a short and simple formula to be written, and the lord Pope confirmed it for me.

"Those who presented themselves to observe this kind of life distributed all that they might have to the poor. They contented themselves with a tunic, patched within and without, with the cord and breeches, and we desired to have nothing more.

"The clerks said the office like other clerks, and the laymen *Pater noster*. We loved to live in poor and abandoned churches, and we were ignorant

and submissive to all. I worked with my hands and would continue to do, and I will also that all other Friars work at some honourable trade. Let those who have none learn one, not for the purpose of receiving the price of their toil, but for their good example and to flee idleness. And when they do not give us the price of the work, let us resort to the table of the Lord, begging our bread from door to door. The Lord revealed to me the salutation which we ought to give: 'God give you peace!'

"Let the Brothers take great care not to receive churches, habitations, and all that men build for them, except as all is in accordance with the holy poverty which we have vowed in this Rule, and let them not receive hospitality in them except as strangers and pilgrims.

"I absolutely interdict all the Brothers, in whatever place they may be found, from asking any bull from the Court of Rome, whether directly or indirectly, under pretext of church or convent or under pretext of preachings, nor even for their personal protection. If they are not received anywhere let them go elsewhere, thus doing penance with the benediction of God.

"I desire to obey the Minister-General of this fraternity, and the guardian whom he may please to give me. I desire to put myself entirely into his hands, to go nowhere and to do nothing against his will, for he is my lord.

"Though I be simple and ill, I would, however,

have always a clerk who will perform the office, as it is said in the Rule; let all the other Brothers also be careful to obey their guardians, and to do the office according to the Rule. If it come to pass that there are any who do not the office according to the Rule, and who desire to make any other change, or if they are not Catholics, let all the Brothers, wherever they may be, be bound by obedience to present them to the nearest custode. Let the custodes be bound by obedience to keep him well guarded like a man who is in bonds night and day, so that he may not escape from their hands until they personally place him in the minister's hands. And let the minister be bound by obedience to send him by Brothers who will guard him as a prisoner day and night until they shall have placed him in the hands of the Lord Bishop of Ostia, who is the lord, the protector, and the corrector of all the Fraternity.

"And let the Brothers not say: 'This is a new Rule;' for this is a reminder, a warning, an exhortation; it is my will, that I, little Brother Francis, make for you, my blessed Brothers, in order that we may observe in a more Catholic way the Rule which we promised the Lord to keep.

"Let the Ministers-General, all the other ministers and the custodes be held by obedience to add nothing to and take nothing from these words. Let them always keep this writing near them, beside the Rule; and in all the chapters which

shall be held, when the Rule is read let these words be read also.

"I interdict absolutely by obedience, all the Brothers, clerics and laymen, to introduce glosses in the Rule, or in this Will, under pretext of explaining it. But since the Lord has given me to speak and to write the Rule and these words in a clear and simple manner, without commentary, understand them in the same way, and put them in practice until the end.

"And may whoever shall have observed these things be crowned in heaven with the blessings of the heavenly Father, and on earth with those of His well-beloved Son and of the Holy Spirit the Consoler, with the assistance of all the heavenly virtues and all the Saints.

"And I, little Brother Francis, your servitor, confirm to you so far as I am able this most holy benediction. Amen."

Another touching incident of these last days was the visit to Francis of the Lady Jacqueline of Settesoli. "She was a widow of the best and richest in all Rome, that by the merits and preaching of the blessed Francis did obtain such grace of the Lord as that evermore was she so full of tears and devotion for the love and sweetness of Christ that she did seem as it were a second Magdalene." Francis wished to see her, and accordingly the strict rule about the admission of women into the house was relaxed. She there-

fore came "shedding many tears in his presence," and bringing with her some cloth of ashen-grey, out of which was made the habit in which he was buried, and some wax for the candles which were to be burnt before his body, and some incense.[1]

The end was fast approaching. Two days before his death he asked to be stripped of all his clothes, and to be put on the ground that he might die in the arms of my "Lady Poverty." "I have done my duty," he said, "may the Christ now teach you yours." Then they put him back in his bed.

The next day, or it may have been on the actual day of his death, he desired to break bread with his Brothers before the end. Not being a priest, it was of course impossible for him to celebrate the Holy Mysteries, but he took bread and broke it in pieces, calling God's blessing upon it. Then he held forth a morsel unto each of the Brethren, enjoining him to eat the whole thereof.

It was on the night of October 3, 1226, that he breathed his last, praising God to the end. And with his songs were mingled those of the little birds he loved so well, for we are told that a great multitude of larks "came above the roof of the house wherein he lay, and flying a little way off, did make a wheel after the manner of a circle

[1] *Spec.*, cxii.

round the roof, and by their sweet singing did seem to be praising the Lord along with him."[1]

Thus "he passed away unto the Lord Jesus Christ, whom with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength he loved with the most ardent desire and with the fullest affection, following Him most perfectly, running after Him most swiftly, and in the end most gloriously overtaking Him that with the Father and the Holy Ghost ever liveth and reigneth from everlasting unto everlasting."[2]

A few hours after, the priests of Assisi and the whole multitude of his people carried his body in procession, each holding aloft branches of trees, to S. Damians, that they might show it to Clare and her sisters.

Lifting the sacred relic from the litter, they held it up to the lattice for a long time that the sisters might be comforted by the sight of it. Then it was taken back to the church of S. George.

* * * * * * *

Canonized already by the voice of the whole people, Francis was formally proclaimed a saint two years after death by his old friend Ugolino, then himself the Pope Gregory IX.

There we leave him, purposely not desiring to pursue the story of quarrellings and fightings that so soon ensued when men persisted in ignoring his

[1] *Spec.*, cxiii. [2] *Spec.*, cxxiv.

last wishes, and calling themselves by his sacred name while ruthlessly destroying his ideal.

His is a light that no man can ever extinguish, for it is a light that derives its brightness from the glory of Him Who lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

May it shine with renewed brilliancy in the midst of the dimness of our own dark days, when the mockers mock and the love of many has waxed cold!

†

APPENDIX A

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

THE sources of information for the life of S. Francis are very numerous, as any one can see for himself by looking in the British Museum Catalogue at the word *Francis* or *Franciscan*.

The sources of information about to be mentioned are only a few out of the many, and are named in chronological order. To understand their comparative value we must bear in mind the state of feeling among the Brothers after the death of Francis. There were at least two great parties. There was the party of the strict observance, the special friends of Francis who understood his mind, and were prepared to carry out his will and last instructions to the letter. Such were Brother Leo, his nurse and confessor, Brother Giles, Brother Juniper, Brother Angelo and others. It is probable that the Order having become so large, for it numbered thousands within a few years after its commencement, it would have been practically impossible to insist on strict observance all round.

To copy Francis was impossible unless the Brothers had his spirit. No very large number of persons like Francis, or at all approaching him, would be likely to appear suddenly on the earth! The wonder is that there were so many truly Franciscan spirits, such as Leo, Giles, and among women, Clare, and her little flock at S. Damians.

It is not surprising then that the other party under Brother Elias was the stronger of the two, at least at first. Elias had no doubt a real desire to reform the Church, and he probably rightly estimated that a more effective work would be done in the long run by a body of men enthused by the example of Francis, and yet attempting a less severe Rule, and one that could be applied all round. It was no doubt a less romantic programme than that of the zealous, strict observants, but it was more practical. It makes one, however, miserable to think that the lovable and meek Francis was no sooner dead than quarrels began. Bearing this in mind, let us proceed to enumerate some of the chief sources of information.

1. *Speculum Perfectionis*, by Brother Leo, 1227. This is put first because, though it is not a complete biography, it is the earliest writing about Francis, and also the work of the Brother who entered perhaps most deeply into the mind of the saint. He nursed him in his last illness, and the book was begun a few months after his death and completed within the year. Francis was hardly cold in his grave before Brother Elias proposed to build a huge church for his relics. This seemed so contrary to the spirit of the saint that Leo actually broke the collecting vase which Elias had put up for contributions. Elias had him beaten and expelled from Assisi. He was smarting under this ill-treatment when he wrote the *Speculum*.

He was at the death of S. Clare in 1253, August 11. He died in practical exile.

M. Sabatier writes of the *Speculum Perfectionis* as follows—

"In this legend, written in December 1227, less than a year after the death of the 'Little Poor Man,' by Brother Leo, who was his secretary, his confessor, and his favourite disciple, the portrait of this great imitator of Christ appears even more beautiful and more original than in the other documents. If I mistake not, this book of Brother Leo's ought to become in our century, after the Gospel, the companion of all those who are going on their way trying to carry out the 'I have compassion on the multitude' of the Divine Master."[1]

The book is published by Fischbacher in the original Latin with notes in French by M. Sabatier. There is a translation by Sebastian Evans of the text, published by David Nutt, London, 1899.

This is the translation to which the reader is frequently referred in the preceding pages.

2. *Thomas of Celano*, 1228—1229. Thomas of Celano was a learned Friar who entered the Order

[1] From a private letter.

in 1215. He is the reputed author of the famous sequence *Dies Iræ.* He wrote a life of S. Francis by request of Pope Gregory IX. M. Sabatier considers that in this first life of S. Francis too much importance is attached to Brother Elias, as if Francis had named him as his successor, which it is practically certain he did not do. Justice is not done to Leo and the faithful "Franciscan" Friars.

3. *The Legend of the Three Companions*, August 1246. This was compiled at the request of the General Chapter. The Three Companions are Leo, Angelo Tancredi, and Rufino. It was intended to supply the omissions of Thomas of Celano's 'Life.'

4. *The Second Life by Thomas of Celano*, 1246—1247. This second 'Life' was written to supply the deficiencies of the first. It is not written in the interest of the party of Brother Elias in the same way as the first.

5. *S. Bonaventura*, 1260—1263. His life of S. Francis is called 'The New Legend.' He was General of the Order. He belonged to the Moderate party, between the extremes of the zealous observants and the lax ones. His desire was to make the Order pure and learned. He was a "compiler and a peacemaker." He purposely suppressed much of the story of laxity among the Brothers during the life of Francis. This book became the official account of Francis, and it was actually ordered that all other previous legends should be destroyed. It is only of comparatively late years that the more ancient 'Lives' have been re-discovered.

There are several other chronicles of the Order and contemporary references to the early Friars. It is sufficient to mention three, viz. *The Fioretti*, or *Little Flowers;* the references in the *Letters of Jacques de Vitry;* and Eccleston's *Arrival of the Friars in England.*

The Fioretti, or *Little Flowers of S. Francis.* This was written by an unknown author, probably at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It has been called "one of the most exquisite religious works of the Middle Ages." It is full of legendary matter, but the language is most devotional, and the stories are evidently founded on fact. It represents the popular belief among the Italians about their hero-saint. There are several English translations; for example, an edition published by Burns and Oates (1887), with an excellent preface by Cardinal Manning. *The Fioretti* will shortly be critically treated in a publication by M. Sabatier. The translation referred to in the preceding pages is that published by J. M. Dent, London, 1899, being a volume of 'The Temple Classics.'

Jacques de Vitry. Some of the most important contemporary testimony to Francis and the early Friars is derived from casual allusions to them in letters and other writings by a Frenchman called

Jacques de Vitry. We have referred to them in the body of the book. For a complete account see Sabatier's *Un Nouveau Chapitre de la Vie de S. François d'Assise* (A New Chapter in the Life of S. Francis). This has now been incorporated in M. Sabatier's latest book, *Tractatus de Indulgentia* (Fischbacher, 1900).

Arrival of the Friars in England, by Eccleston, published in the Rolls Series. Edited by Brewer and Howlett (1858, 1882). This book is interesting as showing the way in which Franciscanism took shape in our own country.

Modern Lives of S. Francis (in English). Till lately most people read about S. Francis in Mrs. Oliphant's popular book, *The Life of S. Francis.*

A translation of the chief parts of S. Bonaventura's 'Legend' is published by Messrs. Washbourne.

Canon Knox-Little has published his Lectures on S. Francis (Isbister and Co.). There are also three Lectures by Dr. Creighton, the present Bishop of London.

For short biographies, there is one by Staff-Captain Douglas of the Salvation Army. It is called *Brother Francis.*

The most scientific account of S. Francis is undoubtedly the *Vie de S. François d'Assise*, by M. Paul Sabatier. The English translation is by Miss Houghton, and is published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. M. Sabatier has devoted himself to the study of S. Francis during the past ten years or more, and has already made important discoveries, besides a general co-ordination of the chief available biographies of, and historical references to, the saint.

APPENDIX B

THE FRIARS IN ENGLAND

THOSE who wish to study the remarkable spread of the Order of S. Francis in our own country must read the Prefaces to the two volumes of *Monumenta Franciscana* in the Rolls Series, by Professor Brewer and Mr. Howlett respectively.

The Friars arrived in England in the year 1226. The original party consisted of four clerks, Brothers Agnello of Pisa, a deacon; Richard of Intworth, an English priest; Richard of Devon, an Englishman in acolyte's orders; and William of Esseby, a young English novice. With them were five laymen. They at once settled in the towns where there were large and neglected classes of persons at that time, uncared for by the monks who lived in country monasteries, or by the secular clergy. We find the Friars' houses in the worst parts, in the outskirts and low, swampy districts near the

walls of cities; for example, near Cornhill in London (the spot now marked by the street called the Minories), and in Oxford the parish of St. Ebbes. Such places were infected with plagues and fevers, and there was much poverty and ignorance.

The Rule of Poverty was very strictly kept by the Friars, and they really shared the life of the people. This was of course much harder for them in the English climate than it could ever have been in Italy. But however lax they became in after years, they seem to have maintained their character for poverty up to the time of their dissolution at the Reformation. Their houses were built of mud and dry grass in these early days, they had no grand abbeys and churches such as we generally associate with Religious Orders. They carried out the instructions of Francis to the letter, looking after the lepers and the poor.

They seem too in a wonderful way to have brought his winning, genial, loving, happy, human spirit to England with them. Thomas of Eccleston, whose story of the *Arrival of the Friars* is most valuable as being a contemporary record, tells us much of their great cheerfulness and happy countenances, their enthusiasm for hard mission work, and their great humility and brotherly love.

They increased very rapidly in England, and by the year 1256 they numbered 1242 brothers in forty-nine convents.

"Of these early Franciscans," says Mr. Howlett, "it is almost impossible to think any evil. It was nothing less than the attraction of a truer holiness that caused the phenomenal growth of the Order. Here a bishop resigned his see, there an abbot put aside his dignity and donned the grey garb of a mendicant Friar, while the learned or the enthusiastic who found no scope in their own monastic orders, escaped like as from a prison to the sanctuary of the Franciscan Habit."

But if thirty years marks the period of rapid increase it also marks the limit of the cultivation of the true Franciscan spirit in the English friaries. After that time there was a decline, though not altogether, as we have already noticed, in the observance of poverty. The chief change came about in the matter of learning. The Friars were originally intended not to be students—they ended by numbering some of the greatest of the theologians among them. Though they were primarily visitors of the sick and poor, they very soon became preachers and confessors. As preachers and confessors it became necessary for them to be students. For some time it would appear that the observance of poverty made it very difficult for them to study. The celebrated Friar Roger Bacon had to depend on his friends to lend him books and paper.

Nevertheless the strictness of the Rule as it came from the hand of Francis was evaded, and that by the direct encouragement of the Popes themselves. The Pope held property for the Friars so that it could be said that they did not actually handle money; though they were not allowed to

receive money for work done, they obtained property by legacies, by pensions, by offerings made to them as chaplains of guilds, etc.

The Friars were not popular with the other clergy for many reasons. The monks disliked their new-fashioned ways, and pretended to be shocked at their mendicancy and their freedom in mixing with the people. They accused them of unspirituality in not devoting more time to prayer, but "it was clear that those Friars were more spiritual than the country gentlemen, the farmers and manufacturers who dwelt in splendid convents and called themselves monks." The parish clergy objected to them because they were more popular confessors than they. No doubt these simple Friars, full of love for Christ and the souls for whom He died, were able to give more real spiritual help to penitents in confession than the secular priests. No doubt too "it was easier to confess an act of shame to a strolling Friar, whose face might never be seen again in the town, than to the parish priest." The bishops too were some of them afraid of the Friars because of their independence of episcopal control and their good favour with the Pope.

In spite of all this there can be little doubt that the early Friars in England, as in Italy, did a vast amount of good by their simple preaching, their vivid teaching by means of Miracle Plays, their hearty, human fellowship with the masses of the people, and their sweet and happy temper, the reproduction of their saintly founder's characteristics.

We have noted these points in order to show that it was not only in the country of its foundation that the Order made a great impression.

How it so soon lost its first purity and beauty; how it became "learned," and therefore un-Franciscan; how the Friars quarrelled, the strict Observants and the Conventuals; how the lay and labouring character of the Order was largely lost: into these questions we cannot enter here. As in the case of Francis himself so with the early Friars in England, we prefer to think of them before the storms came on and wrecked their hopes and ideals.

APPENDIX C

RULE OF S. FRANCIS[1]

HONORIUS, Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his well-beloved sons, Francis and all the other brothers of the Order of the Friars Minor, sendeth greeting and the blessing of the Apostle. The Apostolic chair is wont and accustomed to grant humble petitions, and to incline and grant benevolent favour to meek requests and honest desires. Therefore, well-beloved sons in God, we, inclining and assenting to your meek requests and devout desires, by the Apostolic authority strengthen and confirm to you the Rule of your Order appointed of good memory by Pope Innocent our Predecessor, contained and noted in this present writing, the which is this—

[1] This is a free rendering in modern English of an Early English translation of the Rule published in *Monumenta Franciscana*, vol. ii. (Rolls Series). It is printed here by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

In the Name of God: here beginneth the Rule and the Life of the Brothers Minor. Chap. I.

The Rule and Life of the Brothers Minor is this, to observe and keep the holy gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ in living in Obedience, without property, and in Chastity. Brother Francis promiseth obedience and reverence to the Lord Honorius, Pope, and to his successors lawfully succeeding, and to the Church of Rome; and all other brethren be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.

Of them that wish to accept this life, and in what manner they may be received. Chap. II.

If any that wish to accept this life come to our brethren, let them send them to their ministers provincial, unto whom only, and to none other, licence is granted to receive brothers.

The ministers shall diligently examine them in the Christian Faith and the Sacraments of the Church . . . and if they steadfastly believe in them and will truly and faithfully acknowledge and confess them, and to the end of their life steadfastly keep them: And if they have no wives, or if they have wives and their wives be now entered into some monastery in religion, or have given them leave, by the authority of the diocesan Bishop, the vow of chastity by them promised: and if their wives be of such age that of them may rise no manner of suspicion: let them say to them the words of the holy gospel, that is to say that they go and sell all their goods, and endeavour themselves to distribute them to poor people, and if they cannot do this their good-will to do so sufficeth.

And the brethren shall be well warned that they meddle not nor busy themselves with their temporal goods, nor the procuring thereof, that they may freely do therewith whatsoever God putteth or inspireth in their minds.

Nevertheless if counsel be desired and asked of them in this matter, the ministers have leave to send them unto some God-fearing persons, by whose counsel their goods may be distributed and given to poor people.

Then after this they shall grant to them the clothing of probation, that is to say two coats without a hood, a cord, breeches, a scapular down to the girdle.

But if it be thought expedient to the godly ministers otherwise to be done or (that they should be) dispensed at some time,[1] or when the year of probation is finished and ended, they may receive them to obedience and profession.

And in no wise it may be lawful to them to forsake this Religion,

[1] This sentence is repeated and underlined in the MS.

after and according to the commandment of the Pope, for, after the saying of the holy gospel, no man putting his hand to the plough and looking backwards is fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

And they which are professed and have promised obedience shall have one coat with a hood, and another without a hood that will have it, and such as have need or as are constrained by necessity may have shoes.

And all the brethren must be clothed with simple and vile clothing. And they may patch them and mend them with patches of sackcloth, or with other patches, with God's blessing.

Whom I warn and exhort that they (neither) despise nor judge those men which they see clothed with delicate and soft clothing, or who, with coloured and costly array, use delicious meats and drinks, but much more rather each of them should judge and despise himself.

Of the Divine Service and Fasting, and how the brethren should behave themselves when they travel. Chap. III.

The Clerks shall say their Divine Office after the order or use of the Holy Church of Rome, except the psalter, whereof they may have breviaries.

The Lay-brothers shall say twenty-four paternosters for matins; for lauds, five; for prime, terce, sext, and none, for each of them seven paternosters; for evensong, twelve; for compline, seven. And they shall pray for them that be dead.

And they shall fast from the feast of Allhallow-tide unto the Nativity of Our Lord.

The holy Forty days which begin after the feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord unto the end of continual forty days next following,[1] which Our Lord made sacred with His own holy fasting, those that wish to fast it, blessed be they of our Lord, and those that do not wish to do so be not bound thereto, but they shall fast the other Lent unto the Resurrection of Our Lord. At other seasons they be not bound to fast except on the Fridays. And in manifest necessity the brethren be not bound to corporal abstinence or bodily fasting.

I counsel also, warn and exhort my brethren in Our Lord Jesus Christ that they brawl not nor strive in their words or conversation, and that they neither judge nor condemn none other men; but that they be meek, peaceable, soft, gentle, and courteous, and lowly, honestly speaking and answering to every man as unto them accordeth and belongeth.

And they shall not ride, unless they be constrained by evident necessity or else by sickness.

[1] *i.e.* forty days straight on.

Into whatsoever house or place they enter they shall say first: "Peace be to this house."

And according to the holy gospel, they may eat of all manner of meats which be set before them.

That the brethren may not receive any coin or money. Chap. IV.

I command steadfastly and straitly to all the brethren that in no wise they receive any coin or kind of money, neither by themselves nor by any other person, nevertheless for the necessity of the sick brethren, and for the other brethren to be clothed or needing clothing by ghostly and spiritual friends, the ministers only and the custodes or wardens shall have diligent cure or charge according to the places, times, or seasons, and to the cold countries and regions like as it shall seem them expedient to their necessity or need. Saving this always that like as it is before said they may not receive any manner of coin or money.

The manner how the brethren shall use and occupy themselves in bodily labour. Chap. V.

The brethren to whom God hath given grace and strength to labour shall labour truly and devoutly so and in such wise that idleness the enemy of the soul, excluded and put away, they quench not the inward fervour and spirit of holy prayer and devotion whereunto all transitory and temporary things ought to yield and give place. As for the hire and wages for their labour, they may receive for themselves and for their brethren those things that be necessary and needful for their bodies except coin or money, and that lowly and meekly, as appertaineth and belongeth to the servants of God and the true followers of most perfect and holy poverty.

How that the brethren may not appropriate to themselves anything in any manner or wise: and of alms to be asked and of the charity to be due to the sick brethren. Chap. VI.

The brethren shall appropriate nothing to themselves, neither in housing, nor in lands, nor in rent, nor in any manner of thing, but like pilgrims and strangers in this world in poverty and meekness in serving Almighty God they shall faithfully, boldly, and surely and meekly go for alms; they shall not nor ought to be ashamed, for Our Lord made Himself poor in this world.

This is the high dignity of most profound and high poverty, the which hath instituted and ordained you, most dear brethren, kings and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven; it hath made you poor and bare in temporal goods, and exalted and promoted you in virtues and heavenly riches. This shall be your portion, the which will lead you to the land of quick and living people. To which, my most well-beloved brethren, utterly knit and conjoined you shall

never desire other things under Jesu, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And wheresoever any of the brethren find other they shall share and use themselves together as brethren of one house, and each of them to other should surely show their necessity and need; for why if the mother nourish and love the carnal natural son or child how much more diligently, tenderly, and inwardly should every brother love and cherish his spiritual brother. And if any of them fall in sickness of disease, the other brethren shall attend, serve, and keep him, like as they would be served, attended, and kept themselves.

Of penance to be enjoined to the brethren falling in sin. Chap. VII.

If any of the brethren by the envy or instigation of the ghostly enemy fall into deadly sin, for their sin for the which it is ordained among the brethren that they shall go and have recourse only to the ministers provincial, the foresaid brethren be bound to go and have recourse unto them as shortly as they may without any tarrying. And the said ministers if they be priests shall enjoin them penance with compassion and pity, and if they be no priests themselves they shall make penance to be enjoined to them by other priests of their Order, like as it shall be thought by them after charity most expedient, and they ought to be well ware that they be not troubled or angry for any brother's offence; for why, anger and trouble of the mind preventeth charity in themselves and in other.

Of the election of the General Minister of the Brotherhood and of the Chapter at Whitsuntide. Chap. VIII.

All the brethren are bound to have one of this religion to their general minister and servant of this fraternity, and they are bound steadfastly to obey unto him, after whose decease the election of his successor must be had by the ministers provincial and the custodes at the Chapter of Whitsuntide, in the which chapter all the brethren being ministers are bound always to assemble and gather together wherever it shall be ordained or appointed by the General Minister, and that once in three years or at any other time more or less, like as it shall be ordained or appointed by the said General Minister. And if it seem or appear at any time to the whole congregation of Ministers provincial, and Custosies, the foresaid minister not to be sufficient and able for that office and expedien to that service and commonwealth of the brethren, the foresaid brethren to whom the election is given and belongeth are bound in the Name of Almighty God to choose them another to their minister.

And after the Chapter of Whitsuntide the Ministers and the Custosies may once the same year each of them in their custodies

gather together their brethren to Chapter if they think it necessary and expedient.

Of the Preachers. Chap. IX.

The brethren shall not preach in the diocese of any bishop when it is of him to them forbidden, and none of the brethren shall be so bold as to preach to the people unless he be of the General Minister of this brotherhood examined, approved, and admitted of him to the office of preaching. I warn also, require and exhort the same brethren that in their preaching their words and speech be examined and chaste to the profit and edifying of the people, showing to them vices and virtues, pain and joy with few words; for why, Our Lord made but short preaching and sermons here upon earth.

Of the admonition and correction of the brethren. Chap. X.

The brethren which be the ministers and servants of the other brethren shall visit and admonish or warn their brethren, and meekly and charitably they shall correct them, not bidding or commanding them anything that is contrary to their souls' health and against our rule. The brethren also which be subjects should remember that they for God's sake and love of Almighty God, have denied and forsaken their wills.

Whereupon I straightly command them that they obey to their ministers in all things which they have promised to our Lord that be not contrary to their souls' health and against our rule. And wheresoever any brethren be which know and perceive themselves that they cannot spiritually and ghostly and according to their souls' health keep their rule, they may and shall have recourse to their ministers. And their ministers charitably and lawfully, lovingly shall receive them, and so much familiarity or favour they shall show unto them that they may say and do like as lords unto their servants, for soothly it should be so that the ministers should be servants of all the brethren. I warn also and exhort my brethren in Our Lord Jesus Christ that they be well warned from all manner of pride, vain-glory, envy and malice, from care and charge of this world and all worldly business, and from detraction and murmuring. And those that be unlearned shall not busy themselves to be lettered and learned; but they should attend and take heed above all things and desire to have the Spirit of our Lord and His holy operation to pray always to Almighty God with a pure spirit and a clean heart: and to have lowliness and meekness and patience in trouble and persecution and in sickness, and to love them which vexeth, troubleth, and persecuteth us, and that reproveth, challengeth, and rebuketh us; for why, our Lord saith, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecuteth and challengeth or rebuketh you. Blessed and happy be they the which suffer trouble and persecution

for justice and righteousness, for which they be ordained to be inheritors and possessors of the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever persevereth and cometh to the end shall be saved.

That the brethren enter not into the place or monastery of nuns. Chap. XI.

I command steadfastly and straightly to all the brethren that they have no suspect or suspicious fellowship or company or suspect counsels or communication with women; and that they enter not into the place or monasteries of nuns, except those to whom special licence is granted from the court of Rome, and they may not be godfathers or gossips of men or women, lest thereby rumour or slander should rise of the brethren amongst the brethren.

Of them that will or intend to go amongst the Saracens or infidels. Chap. XII.

Whosoever of the brethren by divine inspiration will go among the Saracens or other infidels they shall ask licence thereof of their Ministers provincial, and the ministers shall not give licence to any of the brethren to go but to such as they judge to be sad, and able and sufficient to be sent. These things by obedience I enjoin unto the Ministers that they ask and require one of the cardinals of the Pope and of the Holy Church of Rome, the which shall be governor, defender, and protector and corrector of this fraternity, that we, always being subject and subdued under the feet of the same Holy Church, being steadfast and stable in the Catholic and Christian faith, and that we may truly keep poverty and meekness, and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which we have steadfastly and straightly vowed and promised.

The conclusion of the confirmation.

And therefore in no wise it shall be lawful to any man to break or withstand this charter or writing of our confirmation, or to contrary it, or to do against it by boldness and presumption or rash audacity in any manner of thing: for whosoever be so hardy to do or presume or take in hand, or in such wise to do, he shall know and understand himself that thereby he falleth or runneth into the great indignation of Almighty God and of His blessed apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at the Lateran the third kalends of December, the eighth year of our Pontificate.

(*Here endeth the Rule and the Life of the meek brethren.*)

THE END.

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